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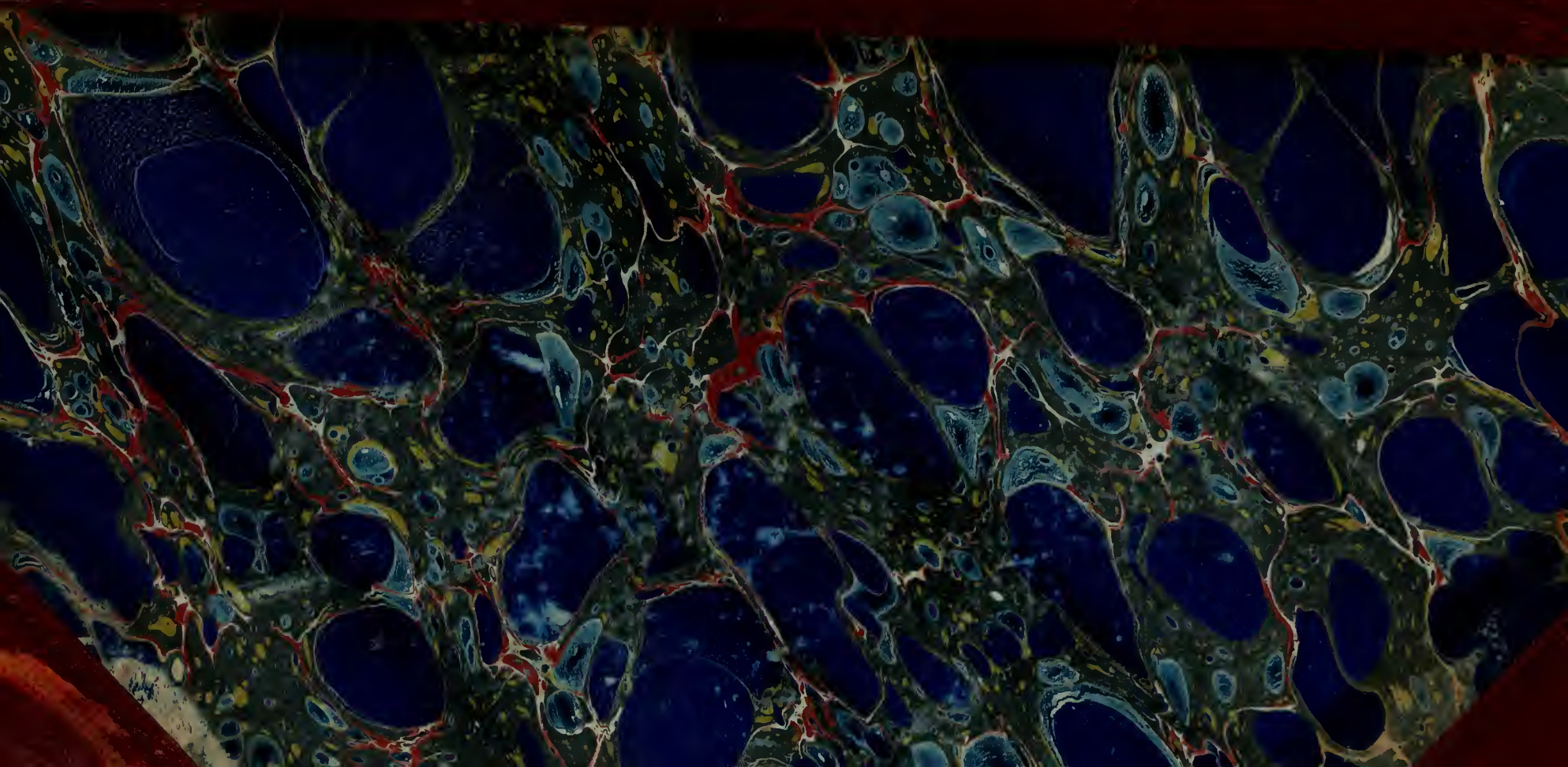

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HARRY FURNISS. J. SWAIN.

*"Laden with Golden Grain."*

THE

# ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XVII.

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# THE ARGOSY.

*JANUARY* 1, 1874.

## IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

### CHAPTER I.

#### OVER THE CLIFF.

A HOT, windless August day had settled down into a dull, brooding evening, presageful of a coming storm. It was nearly dark by the time Lionel Dering was ready to turn his face homeward. The tide was coming in with an ominous muffled roar; the wind, unfelt all day, was now blowing in fitful puffs from various points of the compass, so that the weathercock on the green, in front of the Silver Lion, was more undecided than usual, and did not know its own mind for two minutes at a time. The boatmen were busy with their tiny craft, making everything fast for the night; and the bathing men were dragging their machines high and dry beyond reach of the incoming tide. Many of the excursionists—those with families chiefly—were already making their way towards the railway station; but others there were who seemed bent on keeping up their merriment to the last moment. These latter could be seen through the wide-open windows of the Silver Lion, footing it merrily on the club-room floor, to the music of two wheezy fiddles. A few minutes later there comes a warning whistle from the engine. The music stops suddenly; the quadrille is left unfinished; pipes are laid aside; glasses are quickly emptied; and the lads and lasses, with many a shout and burst of laughter, rush helter-skelter across the green, to find their places in the train.

"We shall have a rough night, Ben," said Mr. Dering to a man who was coming up from the beach.

"Yes, sir, there's a storm brewin' fast," answered Ben, carrying a finger to his forehead. "If I was you, Mr. Dering," he added, "I

wouldn't go over the cliffs to-night. It ain't safe after dark, and the storm 'll break afore you get home." But Mr. Dering merely shook his head, laughed, bade Ben good-night, and kept on his way.

The old boatman's words proved true. The first flash of lightning came just as the last houses of Melcham were lost to view behind a curve of the road, and when Lionel had two miles of solitary walking still before him. The thunder and the rain, however, were still far out at sea.

By this time it was almost dark, but Mr. Dering pressed forward without hesitation or delay. The cliff road, dangerous as it would have been under such circumstances to any ordinary wayfarer, had for him no terrors. He knew every yard of it as well as he knew the walk under the apple-trees in his own garden. It was not the first time by any means that he had traversed it after nightfall. As for the lightning, it was rather an assistance than otherwise, serving every two or three minutes, as it did, to show him exactly where he was. It was a bad road enough, certainly. Unfenced in several places, with here and there a broad, yawning chasm in the direct path, where some huge bulk of the soft earthy cliff, undermined by fierce winter tides, had broken bodily away and had gone to feed the ever-hungry waves. But to Lionel every dangerous point was familiar, and he followed the little circuitous bends in the path, necessitated by the breaks in the frontage of the cliff, instinctively and without thought.

He had been thinking of Edith West—his ladye-love, whom he might not hope ever to see again. In his long solitary walks both by day and night she was almost always in his thoughts. Not but what Lionel, this evening, had an eye for the lightning, so beautifully terrible in its apparently purposeless vagaries. Fast following one another, came the blue, quivering flashes, lighting up, for one brief moment at a time, the barren skyward-climbing cliff, and the still more barren waste of sea.

"Like my life—like my life," murmured Lionel to himself, his eyes still bent on the wide track of moorland, which had just been lighted up by a more vivid flash than common. "Barren and unprofitable. Without byre or homestead. Left unploughed, unfenced, uncared for. Of no apparent use, were it not that a few wild-flowers choose to grow there, and a few birds, equally wild, to build their nests there. But over it, as over more favoured spots, the free breeze of Heaven blows day and night, and keeps it sweet; and the sea makes everlasting music at its feet."

These thoughts were still in Mr. Dering's mind when a sudden turn in the pathway brought him in view of the lighthouse, whose gleaming lantern, although full half a mile away, shone out through the coming storm like the cheery welcome of a friend.

The thunder was coming nearer, bringing the rain with it. The

flashes were becoming more vividly painful. The sea's hoarse chorus was growing more loud and triumphant. Lionel had paused for a moment to gather breath. A flash—and there, not fifty yards away, and coming towards him, was a man—a stranger! It was the work of an instant for the lightning to photograph the picture on his brain, but that one instant was enough for him to see and recognize the deadly peril in which the man was placed. He was marching unknowingly to his death. Not six yards in front of him yawned the most dangerous chasm in the whole face of the cliff.

In another moment Lionel had recovered his presence of mind. "Stop! stop for your life!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "Don't stir another step." It was too dark for him to see whether the man had heard and understood his warning cry. He must wait for the next flash to tell him that. The words had hardly left his lips when the thunder burst almost immediately over head, as it seemed, and the first heavy drops of rain began to fall. Lionel, meantime, was making his way as quickly as he could round the back of the chasm. Two minutes more would bring him to the very spot where he had seen the stranger. But while he had still some dozen yards or more of the dangerous path to traverse, there came another blinding flash. It had come and gone in the twinkling of an eye, but that brief second of time was sufficient to show Lionel that the man was no longer there. An inarticulate cry of horror burst from his lips. With beating heart and straining nerves, he pressed forward till he stood on the very spot where he had seen the man: but he was standing there alone.

The storm was at its height. The forked flashes came thick and fast. One crack of thunder was followed by another, before the echoed mutterings of the last had time to die away. A wild hurricane of wind and rain was beating furiously over land and sea. Utterly regardless of the storm, Lionel lay down at full length on the short, wet turf, and shading his eyes with his hands, peered down into the black gulf below. It was a dangerous thing to do, but in the excitement of the moment all sense of personal fear was forgotten. He waited for the flashes; but when they came they showed him nothing save the wild turmoil of the rising tide as it dashed itself in fury against the huge boulders with which the beach was thickly strewn. It would be high water in half an hour. Already the base of the cliff was washed by the inrushing waves. Lionel shouted with all his might, but the wind blew the sound back again, and the thunder drowned it. He stood up despairingly. What should he do to succour the poor wretch who lay there, dying or, perhaps, already dead, at the foot of the cliff? What *could* he do? Alone and unaided he could do nothing. He must seek the help of others. But where? The nearest point where he could hope to get assistance was the lighthouse, and that was nearly half a mile away. But long before the lighthouse could have been reached, and help brought back, the

rising tide would have completely barred the passage along the foot of the cliffs, and would, in all probability, have washed the body out to sea. At the point where he was standing the cliff had a sheer descent of a hundred feet to the beach. But suddenly Mr. Dering remembered, and it seemed to him like a flash of inspiration, that no great distance away there was a slight natural break in the cliff, known as "The Smugglers Staircase." It was merely a narrow gully or seam in the face of the rock, not much wider than an ordinary chimney. If it had ever really been used by smugglers in years gone by as a natural staircase, by means of which access could be had to the beach, they must have been very active and reckless fellows indeed. But what had been made use of by one man might be made use of by another, Lionel thought, and, with some faint renewal of hope in his breast, he made his way along the cliff in the direction of the Staircase. If he could only get down to the beach before the tide had risen much higher, and could succeed in finding the body, he might, perhaps, be able to obtain some foothold among the crannies of the cliff, where he would be beyond reach of the waves, and where he might wait till daybreak, and the ebbing of the tide, should give him a chance of seeking help elsewhere.

But here he was at the Staircase—a place, of a truth, to try a man's nerve, even by broad daylight. Although Lionel had never ventured either up or down it, he was no stranger to its peculiar features. More than once, in his rambles along the cliffs, he had paused to examine it, and to wonder whether the jagged, misshapen ledges of protruding rock from which it was supposed to derive its likeness to a gigantic staircase, were the result of Nature's handiwork or that of man.

Lionel had lost no time. From his first sight of the stranger till now was not more than five or six minutes. Pausing for a moment on the edge of the Staircase, he flung his hat aside, buttoned his coat, and then, instinctively, turned up his cuffs. Then he went down on his hands and knees, and was just lowering one leg over the edge of the cliff, when his collar was roughly seized, and a hoarse voice growled in his ear: "In heaven's name, Mr. Dering, what are you about?"

For the moment, Lionel was startled. Next instant he recognized Bunce, the coastguardsman—a very worthy fellow, to whom he was well known. A few rapid words from Lionel explained everything. "All the same, Mr. Dering, you can't bring the dead back to life, do how you will," said Bunce, "and that man's as dead as last year's mackerel, you may depend on't. Let alone which, the tide's right up to the bottom of the cliff. No, no, Mr. Dering—axing your pardon—but one live man is worth twenty dead uns."

"Bunce, you are a fool!" said Lionel, wrathfully "If I were not in a hurry, I would prove it to you. Take your hand off my collar, sir. I tell you I am going down here. If you choose to help me, go to the lighthouse and get Jasper to come back with you, and bring

some ropes and a lantern or two, and whatever else you think might be useful. If you don't choose to help me, go about your business, and leave me to do mine."

"But you are going to certain death; you are indeed, Mr. Dering," pleaded the coastguardsman.

"Bunce," said Lionel, "you are an old woman. Good-bye." There was a flash, and Bunce caught a momentary glimpse of a stern white face and two resolute eyes. When the next flash came, Lionel was not to be seen. He was on his perilous journey down the Smugglers' Staircase.

"A madman—a crazy madman," muttered Bunce. "If he gets safe to the bottom of the Staircase, he'll go no further. Not as I'm going to desert him. Not likely. Though he did call me a old woman."

Going down on one knee on the wet grass, he put both his hands to his mouth, and shouted with all his might. "I'm going to the lighthouse for help, Mr. Dering." He listened but there came no answer. Presently, with a little quaking of the heart, he rose to his feet. "He needn't have called me a old woman," he muttered. With that he pulled his hat fiercely over his brow, and set off for the lighthouse at a rapid walk, which soon quickened into a run.

How Lionel got down to the bottom of the Staircase he could never afterwards have told. He only knew that when about half way down his foot slipped. The next thing he remembered was finding himself among the rocks at the bottom, bruised, bleeding, and partially stunned. A larger wave than usual, which dashed completely over him, gave him a shock which helped to revive him. Not the least perilous part of his enterprise was still before him. Already the tide was two feet deep at the foot of the cliff. Fortunately, the wind had gone down, and the rain had in some measure abated; but had it not been for the lightning's friendly flashes, Lionel's task would have been a hopeless one. The road he had to take was thickly strewn with huge boulders, and gigantic masses of rock which had fallen—some of them centuries ago—from the cliffs overhead. Between and over these Lionel had to make his way to the point where the stranger had fallen. It was a work of time and peril, more especially now that the tide was coming in so dangerously fast, beating and eddying round the rocks and dashing over them in showers of stinging spray. Lionel saw clearly that, in any case, it would be quite impossible for him to return by the way he was going till ebb of tide. He must find some "coign of vantage" among the fallen rocks, or high up in the face of the cliff, beyond reach of the waves, and there wait patiently for further help. But first to find the stranger.

Manfully, gallantly, Lionel Dering set himself to the task before him. Foot by foot, yard by yard, he fought his way forward. The lightning showed him at once the dangers he had to contend against,

and how best to avoid them. Over some of the rocks he had to clamber on all fours; round others he had to pick his way, waist-deep in water. Now and then, a larger wave than common would seize him, dash him like a log against the rocks, and then leave him, bruised and breathless, to gather up its forces for another attack. But Lionel never faltered or looked back. Onward he went, slowly but surely nearing the object of which he was in search. Nearly exhausted, all but worn out, at length he reached the heap of débris formed by the falling of the cliff—or rather that portion of it which the sea had spared. He was terribly anxious by this time. If the body of the stranger when it fell had been caught by any of the ledges or rough projecting angles of the débris, and had lodged there, there was just a faint possibility that the man might be still alive. But if, on the contrary, it had rolled down to the foot of the cliff, the waves would long ago have claimed it as their own.

The storm was passing away inland. The lightning was no longer either so frequent or so vivid. Lionel's difficulty was to find the exact point of the cliff from which the stranger had fallen. At the most he could only guess at it. Still, here was the mass of fallen cliff, and the body, unless washed away by the tide, could not be far away.

Having accomplished so much, he had neither long nor far to search. Putting out his hand in the dark to grasp a projecting ledge of rock, which the last flash of lightning had shown to him, his fingers touched a clammy ice-cold face. He drew back his arm with an involuntary shudder. Next moment his heart gave a great throb of relief, and he felt that, whether the man were alive or dead, his labour had not been entirely in vain.

The body was lying among a heap of jagged rocks, half in and half out of the water. Lionel's first idea was that the man was stone dead. But a more careful examination, which he made as soon as he had dragged the body beyond reach of the still-rising tide, convinced him that there were still some flickering signs of life—just the faintest possible pulsation of the heart. The forehead was marked by a thin streak of blood, which Lionel tried to staunch with his handkerchief. For the rest, he made out, by the momentary glimpses which the lightning afforded him, that the man was young, fair, slightly built, and to all appearance, a gentleman. Feeling some hard substance, Lionel put his hand into the stranger's pocket, and drew from it a small travelling flask. It contained a little brandy, with which Lionel moistened the unconscious lips, but the stranger's teeth were so firmly set that he found it impossible to open them. What more could he do? he asked himself, and he was obliged to answer, Nothing. If Bunce had not deserted him, help would be forthcoming before long. Otherwise, he must wait there for daybreak and the ebbing of the tide.

But faithful, good-hearted Bunce had not deserted him. He had

roused up Jasper, the lighthouse-keeper, out of his first snooze — Jasper's two mates being on duty—and had brought that individual, still half dazed, but responding manfully to the call, together with a quantity of stout rope, and a couple of ship's lanterns, not forgetting a blanket and a nip of cognac, and was back again on the cliffs only a few minutes after Lionel's search was at an end.

Never had human voice sounded so welcome to Lionel as did the coastguardsman's hoarse shouts that August night. They soon made each other out, and then the rest was comparatively easy. A rope was slung round the body of the still unconscious stranger, which was then hauled up by the two men with all possible care to the top of the cliff, a process which was repeated in the case of Lionel.

"I never thought to see you alive again, Mr. Dering," said Bunce, with tears in his eyes, as Lionel grasped him warmly by the hand. "Where do you wish to have the gentleman taken to?"

"To Gatehouse Farm, of course," said Lionel. "Jasper, you run into the village, and borrow a horse and cart, and some straw, and another blanket or two, and get back again as if your life depended on it."

And so about midnight the stranger, who had never recovered consciousness, was laid in Mr. Dering's own bed at Gatehouse Farm. They had found a card-case in his pocket, the cards in which were inscribed with the name of "Mr. Tom Bristow," but that was the only clue to his identity. Dr. Bell, the local practitioner, was quickly on the spot.

"A serious case, Mr. Dering—a very serious case," said the little man, two hours later, while pulling on his gloves and waiting for his cob to be brought round. "But we have an excellent constitution to fall back upon, and, with great care, we shall pull through. We have dislocated our left shoulder; we have broken three of our ribs; and we have got one of the ugliest cuts on the back of our head that it was ever our good fortune to have to deal with. But with care, sir, we shall pull through."

Somewhat comforted in mind by the doctor's assurance, Lionel went back up stairs, and having taken a parting glance at his guest, and satisfied himself that nothing more could be done for the present, he lay down on the sofa in the next room to snatch an hour's hurried sleep.

He had no prevision of the future, that August morning: there was no voice to whisper in his ear that the man whose life he had just saved at the risk of his own would, before many months were over, repay the obligation by rescuing him, Lionel Dering, from a still more bitter strait, and be the means of restoring h... both to liberty and life.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HERMIT OF GATEHOUSE FARM.

LIONEL DERING at this time was twenty-eight years old. A tall, well-built, fair-complexioned man, but bronzed by much exposure to the sun and wind. His eyes were dark grey, very steady and penetrating. He had a habit of looking full into the faces of those with whom he talked, as though he were trying to penetrate the mask before him. It was a habit which some people did not like. He had never shaved in his life, and the strong, firm lines of his mouth, betokening immense power of will and great tenacity of purpose, were all but hidden by the soft, flowing outlines of a thick beard and moustache, pale golden as to colour. His free, outdoor life, and the hard work to which he had accustomed himself of late years, had widened his chest and hardened his muscles, and had ripened him into a very tolerable specimen of those stalwart, fair-bearded islanders whose forms and figures are familiar wherever the English language is spoken. For three years past he had been living the life of a modern hermit at Gatehouse Farm. His reasons for choosing thus to isolate himself entirely from the world of his old friends and associations, to bury himself alive, as it were, while all the pleasures of life were still sweet to his lips, will not take long to explain.

Lionel Dering came of a good family on both his father's side and his mother's. Unfortunately, on his father's side there was little or no money, and his mother's side never forgave the marriage, which was one of those romantic run-away affairs of which people used to hear every week at a time when the blacksmith of Gretna Green was a legal forger of matrimonial fetters.

After nine years of married happiness, Godfrey Dering died, leaving his widow with two children, Lionel, aged eight, and Richard, aged six. Mrs. Dering found herself with an annuity of six hundred pounds a year, which her husband's care and prevision had secured to her. For the future, this would be the sole means of subsistence of herself and children. Her own family had repudiated her from the day of her marriage, and she was too proud to court them now. She sent her two boys away to a good school, and while still undecided where she would permanently fix her home, she went to live for a while with some of her husband's friends at Cheltenham—and at Cheltenham she stayed till the day of her death. The Langshaws, under whose roof she found a home during the first year of her bereavement, were worthy well-to-do farmers, distant relations of Godfrey, who seemed as if they could never do enough for pretty Mrs. Dering and her two fatherless boys. After a time she took lodgings in the town itself, where her money and her good looks, combined with her amiability and easy, cheerful disposition, soon attracted around her a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. She had several offers of marriage during the

ten years of her widowhood, but she remained steadily faithful to the memory of her first love, and when she died her husband's name was the last word on her lips.

His mother died when Lionel Dering was eighteen years old, six months after his younger brother, Richard, had gone to India to carve out for himself that mythical fortune which every enthusiast of eighteen believes must one day infallibly be his.

Lionel had been brought up to no business or profession. While still a youth at school, a great part of his holidays had been spent at the Langshaws' farm, three miles out of Cheltenham, where he was always a welcome guest. Here he learnt to ride, to drive, to shoot, and to take an interest in all those outdoor avocations which mark the due recurrence of the seasons on a large and well-managed farm. But when his school-days were really at an end, both Lionel and his mother were utterly at a loss to decide in which particular groove the young man's talents—genius Mrs. Dering called it—would be likely to meet with their amplest and most speedy recognition.

Truth to tell, the widowed mother trembled at the idea of parting from her favourite boy, of letting him go out unprotected into the great world, so full of wickedness and temptation, of which she herself knew so little, but about which she had heard such terrible tales. So week passed after week, and month after month, and Lionel Dering still stayed at home with his mother. An inquiry was made here and there, a letter written now and then, but all in a half-hearted sort of way, and Mrs. Dering never heard the postman's knock without trembling lest it should be the herald of a summons which would tear Lionel from her side for ever. When, at last, the dreadful summons did come in the shape of the offer of an excellent situation in India, Mrs. Dering declared that it would break her heart if Lionel left her. She was a very delicate little woman, be it borne in mind, and Lionel, who loved her tenderly, fully believed every word she said—believed that her heart would really break if they were separated—as in all probability it would have done. "I won't leave you, mother—I won't go away to India," said Lionel, as he kissed away her tears.

"You might let *me* go, mother, instead of Li," said Richard, as he too kissed her. "If you love me, mother, let me go."

So Richard went to India in place of his brother, and Lionel still stayed at home. Six months later, Mrs. Dering, who had been a partial invalid for years, died quite suddenly, and Lionel found himself, after the payment of all expenses, with about fifty pounds in ready money and no ascertainable means of earning his own living.

In this emergency, a certain Mr. Eitzenschlager, a German merchant, who had met Mrs. Dering in society some five or six years previously, and had fallen in love with her to no purpose, came to the rescue by offering Lionel a stool in his counting-house, at Liverpool. But to

Lionel, with his outdoor tastes, the thought of any mode of life which involved confinement within doors was utterly distasteful. He preferred taking up his quarters for a time with his old friends the Langshaws, and there waiting till another opening should give him an opportunity of joining his brother in India.

When Dorothy St. George ran away from home to marry Godfrey Dering, she never afterwards saw her father, nor any member of her family, except her youngest brother, Lionel—the brother after whom her eldest boy was named. He was a soldier, and shortly after Dorothy's marriage he was ordered abroad, but he wrote occasionally to the sister whom as a boy he had loved so well, therein disobeying his father's express command, that no communication of any kind should henceforth be held with the disgraced daughter of the house. But many years passed before Lionel St. George had an opportunity of seeing his sister—not, in fact, till some time after their father's death: not till he had won his way up, step by step, to the rank of general, and had come back from India, a grizzled veteran, with a year's leave of absence in which to recruit his health, and pay brief visits to such of his relatives and friends as death had spared. His sister Dorothy was one of the first whom he made a point of seeing. For Lionel he contracted a great liking, chiefly, perhaps, because his nephew was named after him, and because in the tall, bronzed young man he saw, or fancied that he saw, many points of resemblance to what he himself had been in happy days long gone by. It was a pity, the general said to himself, that such a fine young fellow should be kept tied to his mother's apron string. So, after he got back to India, he brought his influence to bear, and an eligible opening for Lionel was quickly found. But, as we have already seen, Lionel did not avail himself of his uncle's offer. Richard went to India in his stead, and Lionel was by his mother's side when she died.

Left thus alone, it seemed to Lionel that he could not do better than join his brother, and he wrote his uncle to that effect.

But before he could possibly get an answer from India, something happened which changed the whole current of his life. Mr. Eitzenschlager, the German merchant, died, and left Lionel a legacy of twenty thousand pounds.

What a fund of quiet, unsuspected romance there must have been in the heart of the old Teuton! At fifty years of age he had fallen in love with pretty Mrs. Dering; but Mrs. Dering had nothing but esteem to give him in return. Once rejected, he never spoke of his feelings again, but went on loving in secret and in silence. Had Mrs. Dering outlived him, the twenty thousand pounds would have been left to her. As it was, the money was left to the son whom she had loved so well.

An unexpected legacy of twenty thousand pounds is enough to upset the calculations of most men. It upset Lionel's. The idea of going

out to India was abandoned indefinitely. Now had come the time when he could carry out the cherished wish of his life. Time and money were both at his command, and he would travel—travel far and wide, studying "men and manners, climates, councils, governments." When he was tired of travel, he would buy a little estate somewhere, and settle down quietly for the remainder of his days as a gentleman farmer. Such were some of the day-dreams of simple-minded Lionel—day-dreams which the future would laugh to scorn.

Hitherto Lionel had escaped scathless and heart-whole from all the soft seductive wiles prepared by Love to ensnare the unwary. But his time had come at last, as it comes to all of us. He saw Edith West, and acknowledged himself a lost man. Nor could anyone who knew Edith wonder at his infatuation. She was an orphan and an heiress. She lived with her uncle, Mr. Garside, who was also her guardian. Lionel saw her for the first time in a railway carriage, when she and Mrs. Garside were travelling from London to Cheltenham. There was a slight accident to the train, and Lionel was enabled to show the ladies some little attention. Three weeks after that chance meeting, Lionel proposed in form for the hand of Mr. Garside's niece.

Lionel's proposal was very favourably received, for Mr. Garside was prudence itself, and young men worth twenty thousand pounds are not to be met with every day. Very wisely, however, he stipulated that the lovers should wait a year before fastening themselves irrevocably together.

So Lionel, after spending two months in London, where he had an opportunity of seeing Edith every day, set out on his travels. In ten months from the date of his departure he was to come back and claim her for his wife. He left the Continent and the ordinary lines of tourist travel to be done by Edith and himself after marriage, and started direct for America. Cities and city life on the other side of the Atlantic did not detain him long. He panted for the wild, free life and noble sports of the prairies and mountain slopes of the Far West. He spent six happy months with his rifle and an Indian guide on the extreme borders of civilized life. Then he crossed the Rocky Mountains, and found himself, after a time, at San Francisco. There letters from home awaited him. One of the first that he opened told him of the failure of the bank in which the whole of his legacy, except a few hundred pounds, had been deposited. Lionel Dering was a ruined man.

One morning, about three months later, Lionel was ushered into the private office of Mr. Garside, in Old Broad Street, City. The rich merchant shook hands with him, and was polite but freezing. Lionel went at once to the object of his visit. "You have heard of my loss, Mr. Garside?" he said.

"I have, and am very sorry for it," said the merchant.

"I have saved nothing from the wreck but a few hundred pounds.

Under these circumstances, I come to you, as Miss West's guardian, to tell you that I give up at once, and unreservedly, all pretentions to that lady's hand. I absolve her freely and entirely from the promise she made me. Miss West is an heiress: I am a poor man: we have no longer anything in common."

"Very gentlemanly, Mr. Dering—very gentlemanly, indeed. But only what I should have expected from *you*."

Lionel cut him short somewhat impatiently. "You will greatly oblige me—for the last time—by giving this note to Miss West. I wish her to understand, direct from myself, the motives by which I have been actuated. This is hardly a place," looking round the office, "in which to talk of love, or even of affection; but, in simple justice to myself, I may say—and I think you will believe me—that the feelings with which I regarded Miss West when I first spoke to you twelve months ago, are utterly unchanged, and, so far as a fallible human being may speak with certainty, they will remain unchanged. I think I have nothing more to say."

But Lionel's note never reached Edith West. When Mr. Garside had finished recounting to his wife the details of his interview with "that strange young man," he gave her the note to give to Edith; but the giving of it was accompanied by a look which his wife was not slow to comprehend. The note was never alluded to again between husband and wife, but somehow it failed to reach the hands for which it was intended. Edith was simply told by her guardian that Mr. Dering, with a high-minded feeling which did him great credit, had broken off the engagement. "He is a poor man—a very poor man, my dear," said Mr. Garside, "and he has the good sense to know that you are not calculated for a poor man's wife."

"How does he know that—or you—or anybody?" flashed out Edith. "But Lionel Dering never made use of those words, uncle. They are an addition of your own."

Nevertheless, the one great bitter fact still remained, that her lover had given her up. "If he had only called to see me—or even written!" she said to herself. But days, weeks, months, passed away, and there came no further sign from Lionel. So Edith locked up her love, as some sacred thing, in the innermost casket of her heart, and the name that was sweeter to her than all other earthly names, never passed her lips after that day except in her prayers.

Lionel was not long in making up his mind as to his future course. He had still two or three hundred pounds in ready money, and one small plot of ground that he could truly call his own. The tiny estate in question was known as Gatehouse Farm, and consisted of nothing more than an old-fashioned, tumble-down house, terribly out of repair; an orchard of tolerable dimensions, and about twenty acres of poorish grass-land; the whole being situated in a remote corner of the north-

east coast of England. This modest estate had been his father's sole patrimony, and for that father's sake Lionel had long ago resolved never to part from it. He had visited it once or twice when quite a boy, and from that time it had lived in his memory as a pleasant recollection. To this spot he made up his mind that he would retire for awhile. Here he would shut himself up from the world, and, like King Arthur, "heal him of his wounds." He confessed to himself that he was slightly hipped; a little at odds with Fortune. The ordinary objects and ambitions of his age, which, under other circumstances would probably have found him an eager partizan, had, for the present at least, lost their savour. He was not without friends—good friends, who would have been willing and able to help him on in any career he might have chosen to adopt, but just at that time all their propositions seemed equally distasteful to him. Ambition for the moment was dead within him. All he asked was to be allowed to drop quietly out of the circle of those who knew him, and cherish, or cure, in a solitude of his own seeking, those inward hurts for which Time is the sole physician.

As it happened, the tenant of Gatehouse Farm was lately dead; there was, consequently, nothing to stand in the way of its immediate occupation by Lionel. It was neither a very picturesque nor a very comfortable residence, but sufficiently the latter to satisfy its owner's simple wants. Its upper story consisted of four or five bedrooms. Downstairs was a large and commodious kitchen, together with a house-room, or, as we should call it, a parlour. This latter room was chosen by Lionel for his own particular den. It had white-washed walls, and two diamond-paned windows of dull thick glass, but the floor was made of splendid oaken planks. The walls Lionel left as he found them, except that over the fireplace he hung a portrait of Edith, and his two favourite rifles; but on the floor he spread two or three skins of wild animals, trophies of his prowess in the chase. In a corner near the fireplace, handy to reach, were the twenty or thirty authors whom he had brought with him to be the companions of his solitude. In the opposite corner was the only article de luxe to be found in the house: a splendid cottage piano, of Erard's build.

The dead and gone builder of the house, whose initials, with the date 1685, were still conspicuous on a tablet over the front door, had never been troubled with that mania for the picturesque in nature and art about which we moderns are perpetually prating. In its own little way his house was intensely ugly, and he had persistently built it with its back to the only fine view that could be seen from its windows in any direction. Even after all these years, there was not another house within a mile of it. The only point of habitable life visible from it was the lighthouse. But it was this solitariness, this isolation from the world, which formed its great feature of attraction in the eyes of Lionel. One other attraction it had for him. You had only to cross a couple

of small fields, and follow, for a hundred yards or more, a climbing footway that led across a patch of sandy common, and then, all at once, you saw spread out, far and wide before you, the ever-glorious sea.

To this place came Lionel Dering in less than a month after writing his last letter to Edith West, and here he had since stayed. Two farm labourers and one middle-aged woman constituted the whole of his household. What further labour he might require in his farming operations, he hired. He rose at five o'clock in summer and at six in winter. From the time he got up till two o'clock he worked as hard as any of his own men. The remainder of the day he claimed for his own private uses. He ploughed, he sowed, he reaped. At one time he planted potatoes, at another he dug them up; and nowhere within a score of miles were such fine standard-roses to be seen as at Gatehouse Farm. He found some land to let conveniently near his own small patch, and he hired it. At the end of his second year at the farm he calculated his profits at one hundred and eighty pounds, and was perfectly satisfied.

Lionel saw no company, and never went into society. He was well known to the lighthouse-keepers and to most of the boatmen. With them he would talk freely enough. Their racy sayings, their homely, vigorous diction, their simple mode of life, pleased him. When talking with them he forgot, for a time, himself and his own thoughts, and the change did him good. Not that there was anything of the melancholy, love-sick swain about Lionel—any morbid brooding over his own disappointment, and troubles. No one ever saw him otherwise than cheerful. He was perfectly healthy both in mind and body. Nevertheless, his solitary mode of life, and his persistent isolation of himself from his friends and equals, all tended to throw him back upon his own thoughts, to make him habitually self-introspective, to confirm him in a growing habit of mental analysis.

Whatever the state of the weather, Lionel hardly ever let a day pass without taking a long, solitary ramble into the country for eight or ten miles. Then he had his books, and his piano—which latter was, perhaps, the greatest consolation of his solitude—and the luxury of his own lonely musings as he sat and smoked, hour after hour, with unlighted lamp, and marked how the glowing cinders shaped themselves silently to the fashion of his thoughts.

Two years had by no means sufficed to tire Lionel Dering of his solitary life. In fact, he grew to like it better, to cling to it more emphatically, every day. It satisfied his present needs and ambitions, and that was all he asked. Calmly indifferent, he allowed himself to drift slowly onward towards a future in whose skies there seemed for him no bright bow of promise—nothing but the unbroken greyness of an autumn day that has neither wind, nor sunshine, nor any change.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE FOUNDATION OF A FRIENDSHIP.

NOTWITHSTANDING Dr. Bell's hopeful prognostications, it seemed very doubtful whether Mr. Tom Bristow would ever leave Gatehouse Farm alive. "I did not think his hull was quite so badly damaged as it is," said the worthy doctor, who had formerly been in the navy, to Lionel. "And his figure-head has certainly been terribly knocked about. But he's an A I craft, and I can't help thinking that he'll weather the storm."

And weather the storm he did—thanks to good nursing and a good constitution. When he once took a turn for the better, his progress towards recovery was rapid. But September had come and gone, and the frosts of early winter lay white on meadow and fold, before the doctor's grey pony ceased calling at Gatehouse Farm on its daily rounds. Long before this time, however, a feeling of more than ordinary friendship had grown up between Lionel Dering and Tom Bristow. The points of dissimilarity in the characters of the two men were very marked, but it may be that they liked each other none the less on that account. In any case, this dissimilarity of disposition lent a piquancy to their friendship which it would not otherwise have possessed.

But who and what was this Mr. Tom Bristow?

The account which he gave of himself to Lionel, one afternoon, when far advanced towards recovery, was somewhat vague and meagre; but it more than satisfied the master of Gatehouse Farm, who was one of the least inquisitive of mortals; and, for the present, it will have to satisfy the reader also.

They were sitting on a rustic bench just outside the farm porch, basking in the genial September sunshine. Lionel had his meerschaum between his lips, and was fondling the head of his favourite dog, Osric. Tom Bristow, who never smoked, was busy with a piece of boxwood and a pocket-knife. Little by little he was fashioning the wood into a capital but slightly caricatured likeness of worthy Dr. Bell—a likeness which the jovial medico would be the first to recognize and laugh at when finished. Tom was a slim-built, aquiline-nosed, fair-complexioned, young fellow; rather under than over the ordinary height; and looking younger than he really was—he was six-and-twenty years old—by reason of his perfectly smooth and close-shaven face, which cherished not the slightest growth of whiskers, beard, or moustache. Tom's first action on coming to his senses after his accident was to put his hand to his chin, just then bristling with a stubble of several days' growth; and his first words to the startled nurse were, "My dear madam, I shall feel greatly obliged by your sending for a barber." His eyes were blue, full of vivacity, and keenly observant of all that went on around him.

He had a very good-natured smile, which showed off to advantage a very white and even set of teeth. His hands and feet were small, and he was rather inclined to be proud of them. His dress, while studiously plain in appearance, was made of the best materials, and owed its origin to one of the most famous of London tailors.

"Dering," said Tom suddenly—they had been sitting for full five minutes without a word—"it is five weeks to-day since you saved my life."

"What a memory you have!"

"Seeing that one's life is not saved every day, I may be excused for remembering the fact, unimportant though it may seem to others. It is five weeks to-day since I was brought to Gatehouse Farm, and during all that time you have never asked me a question about myself or my antecedents. You don't even know whether you have been entertaining a soldier, a sailor, a tinker, a tailor, a what's-his-name, or a thief."

"I didn't wait to ask myself any question of that kind when I went down the cliff in search of you, and I don't see why I need trouble myself now."

"As a matter of simple justice both to yourself and me, the mysterious stranger will now throw off his mystery, and appear in the commonplace garb of real life."

"I wouldn't bother if I were you," said Lionel. "Your object just now is to get thoroughly well. Never mind anything else."

"There's no time like the time present. I'm ashamed of myself for not having spoken to you before."

"If that's the matter with you, I know you must have your say. Proceed, worthy young man, with your narrative, and get it over as quickly as possible."

"I was born at a little town in the midland counties," began Tom. "My father was chief medical practitioner in the place, and attended all the swells of the neighbourhood. His intention from the first was to bring me up to the law; so, as soon as I was old enough, he had me articled to old Hoskyns, his bosom friend, and the chief solicitor in the little town. I didn't like the law—in fact, I hated it; but there seemed no better prospect for me at that time, so I submitted to my fate without a murmur. My father died when I was seventeen, leaving me a fortune of six thousand pounds. I stayed quietly on with Hoskyns till I was twenty-one. The day I was of age, the old gentleman called me into his private room, congratulated me on having attained my majority, and asked me in what way I intended to invest my six thousand pounds. 'I am not going to invest it: I am going to speculate with it,' was my answer. The old lawyer looked at me as if I were a madman. 'Going to speculate in what?' he asked faintly. 'Going to speculate on the Stock Exchange,' was my reply. Well, the old gentleman raved and stormed, and talked to me as though I were

a son of his own, even hinting at a possible partnership in time to come. But my mind had long been made up, and nothing he had to say could move me. It seemed to me that in my six thousand pounds I had the foundation of a fortune which might in time grow into something colossal. It is true that the course I had laid down for myself was not without its risks. It was quite possible that instead of building up a large fortune, I should lose the little one I had already. Well, should that black day ever come, it would be time enough then to think of going back to Hoskyns, and of settling down for life as the clerk of a provincial lawyer.

"My father's death left me without any relations, except some far-away cousins whom I had never seen. There was nothing to keep me in my native town, so I set out for London, with many prophecies of coming ruin ringing in my ears. I hired a couple of cheap rooms in a quiet city court, and set up in business as a speculator, and to that business I have stuck ever since."

"Which is as much as to say that you have been successful in it,' said Lionel.

"I *have* been successful in it. Not perhaps quite so successful as my sanguine youthful hopes led me to believe I should be; but still sufficiently so to satisfy myself that in choosing such a career I did not choose altogether unwisely."

"But how is it possible," said Lionel: "that you, a raw country lad of one and twenty, could go and settle down in the great world of London; and, without experience of your own, or any friendly hand to guide you, could venture to play at a game which exercises some of the keenest intellects of the age—and not only venture to play at it, but to rise from it a winner?"

"The simplest answer to that question would be, that I did do it. But really, after all, the matter is not a very difficult one. I have always been guided by three or four very simple rules, and so long as I stick to them, I don't think I can go very far amiss. I never invest all my money in one or even two speculations, however promising they may seem. I never run great risks for the sake of problematical great profits. Let my profits be small but sure, and I am quite content. Lastly, I put my money, as far as possible, into concerns that I can examine personally for myself, even though I should have to make a journey of three hundred miles to do it. See the affair with your own eyes, judge it for yourself, and then leave it for your common sense to decide whether you shall put your money into it or no. In all such professions, natural aptitude—the gift that we possess almost unconsciously to ourselves—is the grand secret of success."

"Success in your case means that you are on the high road to being a millionaire?"

"Now you are laughing at me."

"Not at all. I am only judging you by your own standard."

"And is the standard such a very poor one?"

"Not a poor one at all, as the world goes. I should like very much to be a millionaire."

"To say that I am not richer to-day than I was the day I was twenty-one would not be true," said Tom, with a demure smile. "I am years and years, half a lifetime at the very least, from being a millionaire—if, indeed, I ever live to be one. But I no longer live in two cheap rooms in the city, and dine at an eating-house for fifteen pence. I have very nice chambers just out of Piccadilly, where you must look me up when you are next in town. I belong to a club where I have an opportunity of meeting good people—by 'good people' I mean people who may some day be useful to me in my struggle through life. Finally, I ride my hack in the Park two or three afternoons a week during the season, and am on bowing terms with a duchess."

"I can no longer doubt that you are a rising man," said Lionel, with a laugh.

"My head is full of schemes of one kind or another," said Tom, a little wearily. "Or rather it was full of them before I met with that confounded accident. In one or the other of those schemes the duchess will play her part like any other pawn that may be on my chess-board at the time. There is no keener speculator in the whole City of London than her Grace of Leamington."

"What a martyrdom it must seem to you to be shut up here, in this dull old house, so far away from that exciting life you have learned to love so well!"

"A martyrdom, Dering? It is anything but that. Had I been well in health, I can't tell what my feelings might have been. I should probably have considered it a waste of time to have spent a month, either here or anywhere else, in absolute idleness. But being ill, and having just been dragged back, by main force as it were, from Death's very door, I cannot tell you how grateful, how soothing to me is the quietude of this old spot. If, now and then, when I feel better and stronger, there come moments when I long to glance over the money article of *The Times*, or to write a long, impatient letter to my broker in London, there are days and nights when such things have no longer the faintest interest for me—times when bare life itself seems a burden almost too heavy for endurance, and all my ambitious schemes and speculations nothing more than a tissue of huge mistakes."

"Your old interest in everyday matters will gradually come back to you as you grow better," said Lionel, "and with it will come the desire to be up and doing."

"I suppose you are right," said Tom. "It would never do for a little illness to change the plans and settled aims of a lifetime."

"No chance of your settling down here at Gatehouse Farm as Hermit Number Two?"

Tom shook his head and laughed. "Do you know, Dering," he said, "that you are one of the greatest riddles, one of the most incomprehensible fellows, it was ever my fortune to meet with! But, pardon me," he added hastily. "Of all men in the world, you are the one to whom I ought least to say such words."

"Nothing of the kind," said Lionel, with a smile. "I like your frankness. I am aware that many people look upon me as a sort of harmless lunatic, though what there is so incomprehensible about me I am at a loss to imagine."

"You will forgive me for saying so," said Tom, "but to me it seems such an utter pity to see a man of your education and abilities wasting the best years of his life in a place like this, with no society but that of fishermen and boors: to see a man, young and strong in health, so utterly indifferent to all the ordinary claims of civilized life—to all the aims and ambitions by which the generality of his fellow men are actuated, to the bright career which he might carve out for himself, if he would but take the trouble to do so."

"Ah, that is just it, mon ami: if I would but take the trouble to do so! But is the game really worth the candle? To me, I confess that it is not."

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"I know that you can afford to pity me—that you look upon me as a sort of good natured imbecile."

"No—no!" in energetic protest from Tom.

"But what have you to pity me for?" asked Lionel, without heeding the interruption. "I have enough to eat and drink, I have a roof to cover me, and a bed to sleep on. In these important matters I should be no better off if I had ten thousand a year. As for the society of boors and fishermen, believe me, there is more strength of character, more humour, more pathos, more patient endurance of the ills of this life, and a firmer trust in Providence, among these simple folk than I ever found among those whom you would term my equals in the social scale. Then your ambitions and aims, dignify them with what fine names you will, what are they, nine times out of ten, but the mere vulgar desire to grow rich as quickly as possible! So long as I can earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, and owe no man a penny, I am perfectly satisfied."

"Argue as you will, Dering, this is neither the place nor the position for a man like you."

"So long as the place and position suit me, and I them, we shall remain in perfect accord, and no longer," said Lionel. "I never said it was my intention to live a hermit all my life; but at present I am perfectly satisfied."

Again and again, before Tom Bristow's enforced stay at Gatehouse Farm came to an end, was the same subject broached between him and

Lionel, but always with the same result. As Lionel often said to himself, he was utterly without ambition. He was like a man whose active career in the world was at an end; who knowing that life could have no more prizes in store for him, had settled down quietly in his old age, content to let the race go by, and wait uncomplainingly for the end. It is probable, nay, almost certain, that had his uneventful life at Gatehouse Farm been destined to last much longer, old desires and feelings would gradually have awakened within him; that in time he would have found his way again into that busy world on which he had turned his back in a transient fit of disgust, and there have fought the fight before him like the good and true man he really was at heart.

As days went on, Tom Bristow's strength gradually came back to him, and with it came a restlessness, and a desire to be up and doing that was inherent in his disposition. Long before he was allowed down stairs he had discovered that the old case clock in the kitchen had a trick of indicating the hours peculiar to itself, sometimes omitting to strike them at all, and sometimes going as high as a hundred and fifty; besides which, its qualities as a timekeeper were not to be depended on. To Tom's orderly and accurate mind the old clock was a great annoyance, so the very first day he came down stairs he took the works entirely to pieces. Then, little by little, as his strength would allow him, he cleaned them, put them together again, regulated them, and finally turned the old clock into so accurate a timekeeper that Mrs. Bevis, Lionel's housekeeper, was quite disturbed in her mind for several days, because she had no longer any mental calculations to go through before she could be really sure as to the hour. Then, after he had got still stronger, Tom went systematically through all the locks in the house, repairing and putting into thorough working order all that required it. Then he mended the kitchen window, and put up a couple of shelves for Mrs. Bevis in the dairy—all done as neatly as any workman could have done them. In little jobs of this sort Tom took great delight now that he had so many leisure hours on his hands.

But presently there began to arrive at Gatehouse Farm an intermittent stream of letters, newspapers, pamphlets, and blue books, the like of which had never been known within the memory of the oldest man in the village. Lionel himself stared sometimes when he saw them, but they all had a business interest for Tom, who now began to spend a great portion of his time in receiving and answering letters. Such books as there happened to be in Lionel's small library that had any interest for him—and they were very few indeed—he exhausted during the early days of his illness. How a sensible man could possibly prefer Browning to the money article of *The Times*, or an essay by Elia to the account of a great railway meeting, was matter of intense wonderment to Tom. Poets, novelists, essayists, should be left to women, and to men whose fortunes were already made: but for men

with a career still before them; for pushing, striving men of the world, such reading was a sheer waste of valuable time.

But let Tom Bristow be as worldly-minded as he might be, Lionel Dering could not help liking him, and it was with sincere regret he saw the day drawing near when he and his new-found friend must part. With all Tom's worldly shrewdness and keen love of money getting, there was a rare unselfishness about him; and it was probably this fine trait of character, so rare in a man of his calibre, that drew Lionel so closely to him. As for Tom, he had never met with anyone before whose character interested him so profoundly as did that of Dering. Out of that interest grew a liking almost brotherly in its warmth for the strange young hermit of Gatehouse Farm. When the day came for these two men to part, they felt as if they had known each other for years. At the last moment they shook hands without a word. Tears stood in Tom's eyes. Lionel would not trust himself to speak for fear of breaking down. One long last grip, then the horses sprang forward, and Tom was gone. Lionel turned slowly indoors, feeling more lonely and sad at heart than he had done since the day his darling Edith was lost to him for ever.

## CHAPTER IV.

### GOLDEN TIDINGS.

Days and weeks passed over before the feeling of loneliness caused by Tom's departure from Gatehouse Farm quite wore itself away—before Lionel got thoroughly back into his old contented frame of mind, and felt again in the daily routine of his quiet homely life that simple satisfaction which had been his before the night of the storm. But as the lengthening days of autumn deepened slowly onward towards Christmas, the restlessness and gloom that had shrouded his life of late began to vanish little by little, so that, by-and-by, as Mrs. Bevis joyfully told her husband, "Master was beginning to get quite like his old self again."

The farm preparations for winter were all made. Lionel, looking forward to a long period of leisure, had decided to begin the study of Italian. He had been into Melcham to buy the necessary books, and got back home just as candles were being lighted. On the table he found two letters which had arrived by the afternoon post. One of the two was deeply bordered with black; the other he recognized at once as being from Tom Bristow. He opened Tom's letter first.

In a few hurried lines Tom told Lionel how he had been laid up again from a severe cold which had settled on his chest, and how the doctors had ordered that he should start at once for Algeria with a view of wintering there. He wrote rather dolefully, as one whose business concerns would be altogether disarranged by this imperious mandate, which, nevertheless, he dare not disobey. "I hope to come back next

spring with the swallows, thoroughly rejuvenated," he wrote; "when I will not fail to look you up at dear old Gatehouse Farm."

Lionel took up the second letter with some curiosity. But when he saw that it bore the Duxley post-mark, he guessed in a moment the tidings it was about to tell him. Nor was he mistaken. It told him of the death of his uncle, Arthur St. George, of Park Newton, near Duxley, Midlandshire—and contained an invitation to the funeral, and to the subsequent reading of the dead man's last will and testament.

"This letter is written by my uncle's lawyer," said Lionel to himself. "Why couldn't my cousin Kester write to me?"

It was hardly to be expected that Lionel could either feel or express much sorrow for the death of an uncle whom he had never seen; whom he only knew by reputation as a man thoroughly selfish and hard-hearted; who had persistently slighted and ignored his, Lionel's, mother, from the day she ran away from home till the day of her death—and who had been heard to declare, again and again, that neither his sister nor any child of hers should ever touch a penny of his money. Knowing all this, Lionel was surprised to have received even the acknowledgment of an invitation to his uncle's funeral. His cousin Kester was the heir, and would inherit everything. For him, Lionel, to attend as a mourner at the solemn ceremony was to make a hypocrite of himself by assuming a regret which he could not feel.

This Arthur St. George who had just died was Dorothy Dering's eldest brother. He had lived and died a bachelor. The second brother, Geoffry, had died many years before, leaving one son, Kester, who was adopted by Arthur, and always looked upon as his uncle's heir. Of the youngest brother, Lionel, we already know something. He, too, was a bachelor. He it was who, when over from India on leave of absence, had called upon Mrs. Dering, and had subsequently got that appointment for Lionel which his mother was not willing that he should accept.

While in England, General St. George, who did not believe in family feuds, contrived to bring his two nephews, Lionel and Kester, together. The result was, to a certain extent, a failure. The two young men had never met each other before; and when, after a week's intercourse, they bade each other good-bye, it is greatly to be doubted whether either of them cared about seeing the other again. Kester, who could make himself very agreeable when he chose to do so, was, as his uncle's heir, inclined to look down upon Lionel, and to treat him with a certain superciliousness which the latter could not readily brook. There was no open rupture between them, but from that time to the present they had never met again.

Before Lionel had quite made up his mind whether he would attend the funeral or not, there came a second note from Mr. Perrins, more imperative than the first one:—"Your cousin, Mr. Kester St. George,

is away on the Continent. I am doubtful whether my notification of your uncle's death will reach him in time to allow of his being at the funeral. You and he are the late Mr. St. George's sole relatives, except General St. George, who is in India. If neither you nor your cousin attend the funeral, your uncle will be followed to the grave by no one of his own blood. But that apart, it is highly desirable that, as a near relative of the deceased gentleman, you should be present at the reading of the will, which is fixed to take place in the blue drawing room at four o'clock on the afternoon of the day of interment."

After this there was nothing left for Lionel but to go.

It was not without a strange commingling of various feelings that Lionel Dering found himself under the roof of a house which had been the home of his ancestors for two hundred years. A stately and venerable old pile, truly. He had often heard his mother talk about it, but till this day he had never seen it. It was something to feel proud of, that he was the scion of a family which could call a place like Park Newton its home.

He was received by Mr. Perrins with a cordiality that was at once grave and respectful. Kester St. George had not arrived; neither had there been any message from him. They waited till the last possible moment, but he did not come. Thus it happened that Lionel found himself in the novel position of chief mourner at the funeral of a man whom he had never even seen. He was glad when the ceremony was over.

Then came the reading of the will. "I wish to goodness my cousin would come, even at this the last moment," said Lionel to the lawyer as they walked together towards the blue drawing-room.

"I don't really know that it matters greatly," replied Mr. Perrins with a significant smile. "I daresay we shall get on very well without Mr. Kester St. George."

Ten minutes later Lionel understood the meaning of the lawyer's strange remark. Ten minutes later he found himself the owner of Park Newton, and the possessor of an income of eleven thousand pounds a year.

It was even so. Everything, with the exception of a few trifling legacies to old servants, that Arthur St. George possessed in the world he had bequeathed without reservation to his nephew, Lionel Dering. The name of Kester St. George was not even mentioned in the will.

"The Park Newton estates have never been entailed," said Mr. Perrins in parenthesis, as he folded up the will. "It was quite competent to the testator to have left the whole of his property to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, had he chosen to do so."

For the moment Lionel was overwhelmed. But when Mr. Perrins had congratulated him, and the doctor had congratulated him, and the

butler and the housekeeper, old servants of the family, had followed suit, he began to feel as if his good fortune were really a fact.

"Now I can marry Edith," was his first thought.

"It seems more like a dream than anything else," said Lionel to Mr. Perrins a little later on, as the latter stood sipping a glass of dry sherry with the air of a connoisseur.

"I should very much like to dream a similar dream," answered the lawyer.

"But about my cousin Kester St. George,—he was adopted by my uncle after his father's death, and was brought up at Park Newton, and it was understood by everybody that he was to be my uncle's heir?"

"It is entirely Mr. Kester St. George's own fault that he does not stand in your position to day."

"I fail to understand you."

"For years your uncle's will was made in his favour. Everything was left to him as absolutely as it is now left to you. But about nine months ago your uncle and your cousin had a terrible quarrel. As to how it arose, or what was the cause of it, I know nothing. I can only surmise that your cousin had done something which your uncle felt that he could not forgive. But be that as it may, Mr. Kester St. George was turned out of Park Newton at ten o'clock one night, and forbidden ever to set foot across the threshold again—nor has he ever done so. Next day your uncle sent for me, and in my presence he tore up the old will which had been in existence for years, and substituted in its place the one which I had the honour of reading this afternoon."

That same night saw Lionel Dering in London. He felt that he could neither go back to Gatehouse Farm, nor make any arrangements respecting his new position, till after he had seen Edith West—till after he had seen her and told her that his love was still unchanged, and that there no longer existed any reason why she should not become his wife.

It was past ten o'clock before he got into London. His mind was too much excited either to allow of his going to bed or of his sitting quietly in the hotel. So he lighted a cigar, and set out for a quiet ramble through the streets. After a time he found himself on Westminster Bridge. He stood awhile watching the river as it flowed along so dark and mysterious—watching it, but with thoughts that were far away. Suddenly he became conscious of a dull, confused noise, like the far away murmur of a great crowd. Swiftly the murmur grew, growing and swelling with every moment, till it swelled into a mighty roar from a thousand throats. Then, all at once, there was a flashing of lights, and the trampling of innumerable feet, and three fire-engines went thundering past with yells, and shouts, and hoarse, inarticulate cries from a huge mob that followed hard and fast behind. Lionel

stood back to let this crowd of desperadoes pass,—when all at once, among them, but not of them—borne helplessly along by the press from which he was struggling in vain to free himself, he saw his cousin, Kester St. George. There was a lamp close overhead, and their eyes met for a moment in recognition across a seething mass of the crowd. It was but for a moment, and then Kester was carried away; but in that moment there flashed into his eyes a look of such deadly, fiend-like hate as thrilled Lionel from head to foot. It was a look that once seen could never be forgotten. It chilled Lionel's heart, and, for a time, even blotted out from his thoughts the sweet image of Edith West. He walked back to his hotel, gloomy, ill at ease, and oppressed with strange presentiments of some vague, far-off evil. Even after he fell asleep that look on his cousin's face oppressed him and would not be forgotten. He dreamt that Kester was pursuing him from room to room through the old house at Park Newton. As Kester came in at one door, with that terrible look in his eyes, he, Lionel, passed swiftly out at the opposite door, but on each door-handle, as he touched it, he left behind a stain of blood. The oppression of his dream grew at length too great to be any longer borne, and he awoke shivering with dread, and thankful to find that the blessed daylight was at hand.

(*To be continued.*)

## A DIRGE.

Why were you born when the snow was falling?
You should have come to the cuckoo's calling,
Or when grapes are green in the cluster,
Or, at least, when lithe swallows muster
For their far off flying
From summer dying.

Why did you die when the lambs were cropping?
You should have died at the apples' dropping,
When the grasshopper comes to trouble,
And the wheat fields are sodden stubble,
And all winds go sighing
For sweet things dying.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

## SELINA RADCLIFFE'S HOME.

WHAT I am going to tell of took place before my time. But we shall get down to that by-and-by, for I had a good deal to do with the upshot when it came.

About a mile from the Manor, on the way to the Court (which at that time belonged to my father) stood a very old house built of grey stone, and called Sandstone Torr: the "Torr," as every body knew, being a corruption of Tower. It was in a rather wild and solitary spot, much shut in by trees. A narrow lane led to it from the high-way, the only road by which a carriage could get up to it: but in taking the field way between the Court and Dyke Manor, over stiles and across a running rivulet or two, you had to pass it close. Sandstone Torr was a rambling, high, and ugly old building, once belonging to the Druids, or some ancient race of that kind, and said to have been mighty and important in its day. The points chiefly remarkable about it now were its age, its lonesome grey walls, covered with lichen, and an amazingly lofty tower, that rose up from the middle of the house and went tapering off at the top like an aspiring sugar loaf.

Sandstone Torr belonged to the Radcliffes. Its occupier was Paul Radcliffe, who had inherited it from his father. He was a rather unsociable man, and seemed to find his sole occupation in farming what little land lay around the Torr and belonged to it. He might have mixed with the gentry of the county, as far as descent went, for the Radcliffes could trace themselves back for ages—up to the Druids, I think, the same as the house: but he did not appear to care about it. Who his wife had been nobody knew. He brought her home one day from London, and she kept herself as close as he did, or closer. She was dead now, and old Radcliffe lived in the Torr with his only son, and a man and maid servant.

Well, in those days there came to stay at Dyke Manor a clergyman, named Elliot, with his daughter Selina. Squire Todhetley was a youngish man then, and he and his mother lived at the Manor together. Mr. Elliot was out of health. He had been overworked for the past twenty years in the poor London parish of which he was curate; and old Mrs. Todhetley asked them to come down for a bit of a change. Change indeed it brought to Mr. Elliot. He died there. His illness, whatever it was, took a sudden and rapid stride onwards, and before he had been at Dyke Manor three weeks he was dead.

Selina Elliot—we have heard the Squire say it many a time—was the sweetest-looking girl that ever the sun shone on. She was homeless now. The best prospect before her was that of going out as

governess. The Elliots were of good descent and Selina had been thoroughly well educated; but of money she had just none. Old Mrs. Todhetley bid her not be in any hurry; she was welcome to stay as long as she liked at Dyke Manor. So Selina stayed. It was summer weather then, and she was out and about in the open air all day long: a slight girl, in deep mourning, with a shrinking air that was natural to her.

One afternoon she came in, her bright face all aglow, and her shy eyes eager. Soft brown eyes they were, that had always a sadness in them. I—a little shaver—can remember that, when I knew her in later years. As she sat down on the stool at Mrs. Todhetley's feet, she took off her black straw hat, and began to play nervously with its crape ends.

"My dear, you seem to be in a heat," said Mrs. Todhetley; a stout old lady, who sat all day long in her easy chair.

"Yes, I ran home fast," said Selina.

"Home from whence? Where have you been?"

"I was—near the Torr," replied Selina, with hesitation.

"Near the Torr, child! That's a long way for you to go strolling alone."

"The wild roses in the hedges there are so lovely," pleaded Selina. "That's why I took to go there at first."

"Took to go there!" repeated the old lady, thinking it an odd phrase. "Do you see anything of the Torr people? I hope you've not been making intimate with young Stephen Radcliffe," she added, a thought darting into her mind.

"Stephen? that's the son. No, I never saw him. I think he is away from home."

"That's well. He is by all accounts but a churlish lout of a fellow."

Selina Elliot bent her timid face over the hat, stroking its ribbons with her restless fingers. She was evidently ill at ease. Glancing up presently, she saw the old lady was shutting her eyes for a doze: and that hastened her communication.

"I—I want to tell you something, please, ma'am.——But—I don't like to begin." And, with that, Selina burst into unexpected tears, and the alarmed old lady looked up.

"Why, what ails you, child. Are you hurt? Has a wasp been at you?"

"Oh no," said Selina, brushing the tears away with fingers that trembled all over. "I—if you please—I think I am going to live at the Torr."

The old lady wondered whether Selina was dreaming. "At the Torr!" said she. "There are no children at the Torr. They don' want a governess at the Torr."

"I am going there to be with Mr. Radcliffe," spoke Selina, in her throat, as if she meant to choke.

"To be with old Radcliffe!—Why, the child's gone cranky! Paul Radcliffe don't need a governess."

"He wants to marry me."

"Mercy upon us!" cried the old lady, lifting both hands in her amazement. And Selina burst into sobs again.

Yes, it was true. Paul Radcliffe, who was fifty years of age, if a day, and had a son over twenty, had been proposing marriage to that bright young girl! They had met in the fields often, it turned out, and Mr. Radcliffe had been making his hay while the sun shone. Everybody went on at her.

"It would be better to go into a prison than into that gloomy Sandstone Torr—a young girl like you, Selina," said Mrs. Todhetley. "It would be sheer madness."

"Why, you'd never go and sacrifice yourself to that old man!" cried the Squire, who was just as outspoken and impulsive and good-hearted then as in these latter years. "He ought to be ashamed of himself. It would be like June and December."

But all they said was of no use in the end. It was not that Selina, poor girl, was in love with Mr. Radcliffe—one could as well have fancied her in love with the grizzly old bear, just then exhibiting himself at Church Dykely in a travelling caravan. But it was her position. Without money, without a home, without a resource of any kind for the future, save that of teaching for her bread, the prospect of becoming mistress of Sandstone Torr was something fascinating.

"I do so dislike the thought of spending my whole life in teaching!" she pleaded in apology, the bitter tears streaming down her face. "You cannot tell what it is to feel dependent."

"I'd rather sweep chimneys than marry Paul Radcliffe if I were a pretty young girl like you," stormed the old lady.

"Since papa died you don't know what the feeling has been," sobbed Selina. "Many a night have I lain awake with the misery of knowing that I had no claim to a place in the wide world."

"I am sure you are welcome to stay here," said the Squire.

"Yes; as long as I am here myself," added his mother. "After that—well, I suppose it wouldn't be proper for you to stay."

"You are all kindness; I shall never meet with such friends again; and I know that I am welcome to stay as long as I like," she answered in the saddest of tones. "But the time of my departure must come sometime; and though the world lies before me, there is no refuge for me in it. It is very good of Mr. Radcliffe to offer to make me his wife and to give me a home at the Torr."

"Oh, is it, though!" retorted the Squire. "Trust him for knowing on which side his bread's buttered."

"He is of good descent; he has a large income ——"

"Six hundred a year," interrupted the Squire, slightingly.

"Yes, I am aware that it cannot appear much to you," she meekly said; "but to me it seems unbounded. And that is apart from the house and land."

"The house and land must both go to Stephen."

"Mr. Radcliffe told me that."

"As to the land, it's only a few acres; nothing to speak of," went on the Squire. "I'd as soon boast of my gooseberry bushes. And he can leave all his money to Stephen if he likes. In my opinion, the chances are that he will."

"He says he shall always behave fairly by me," spoke poor Selina.

"Why, you'd have a step-son older than yourself, Selina!" put in the old lady. "And I don't like him—that Stephen Radcliffe. He's no better than he should be. I saw him one day whipping a poor calf a'most to death."

Well, they said all they could against it; ten thousand times more than is written down here. Selina wavered: she was not an obstinate girl, but tractable as you please. Only—she had no homestead on the face of the earth, and Mr. Radcliffe offered her one. He did not possess youth, it is true; he had never been handsome: but he was of irreproachable descent—and Selina had a little corner of ambition in her heart; and, above all, he had a good income.

. It was rather curious that the dread of this girl's life, the one drea above all other dreads, was that of *poverty*. In the earlier days of her parents, when she was a little girl and her mother was alive, and the parson's pay was just seventy pounds a year, they had had such a terrible struggle with poverty that a horror of it was implanted in the child's mind for ever. Her mother died of it. She had become weaker and weaker, and perished slowly away for the lack of those comforts that money alone could have bought. Mr. Elliot's stipend was increased later: but the fear of poverty never left Selina: and now, by his death, she was again brought face to face with it. That swayed her; and her choice was made.

Old Mrs. Todhetley and the Squire protested that they washed their hands of the marriage. But they could only wash them gingerly, and, so to say, in private. For, after all, excepting that Paul Radcliffe was more than old enough to be Selina's father, and had grizzly hair and a grown-up son, there was not so much to be said against it. She would be Mrs. Radcliffe of Sandstone Torr, and might take her standing in the county.

Sandstone Torr, dull and gloomy, and buried amidst its trees, was enough to put a lively man in mind of a prison. You entered it by a kind of shut-in porch, the outer door of which was always chained

back in the day-time. The inner door opened into a long, narrow passage, and that again to a circular stone hall with a heavy ceiling, just like a large dark watch box. Four or five doors led off from it to different passages and rooms. This same kind of round place was on all the landings, shut in just as the hall was, and with no light, save what might be afforded from the doors of the passages or rooms leading to it. It was the foundation of the tower, and the house was built round it. All the walls were of immense thickness; the rooms were low, and had beams running across most of them. But the rooms were many in number, and the place altogether had a massive and grand air, telling of its past importance. It had one senseless point in it—there was no entrance to the tower. The tower had neither staircase nor door of access. People said what a grand view might be obtained if you could but get to the top of it, or even get up to look through the small slits of windows in its walls. But the builder had forgotten the staircase, and there it ended.

Mr. Radcliffe took his wife straight home from the church door. Selina had never before been inside the Torr, and the gloominess of its aspect struck upon her unpleasantly. Leading her down the long passage into the circular hall, he opened one of its doors, and she found herself in a sitting-room. The furniture was good but heavy; the carpet, a Turkey, was nearly colourless with age, but soft to the feet; the window looked out only upon trees. A man servant, who had admitted them, followed them in, asking his master if he had any orders.

"Send Holt here," said Mr. Radcliffe. "This is the parlour, Selina."

A thin, respectable woman of middle age made her appearance. She looked with curiosity at the young lady her master had brought in: at her wedding dress of grey silk, at the pretty face blushing under the white straw bonnet.

"Mrs. Radcliffe, Holt. Show your mistress her rooms."

The woman curtsied, and led the way through another passage to the stairs; and into a bedroom and sitting-room above, that opened into one another.

"I've aired 'em well, ma'am," were the first words she said. "They've never been used since the late mistress's time, for master has slept in a little chamber near Master Stephen's. "But he's coming back here now."

"Is this the drawing-room?" asked Selina, observing that the furniture, though faded, was prettier and lighter than that in the room downstairs.

"Dear no, ma'am! The drawing-room is below and on t'other side of the house entirely. It's never gone into from one month's end to another. Master and Mr. Stephen uses nothing but the parlour. We call this the Pine Room."

"The Pine Room!" echoed Selina. "Why?"

"Because it looks out on them pines, I suppose," replied Holt.

Selina looked from the window, and saw a row of dark pines waving before the higher trees behind them. The view beyond was completely shut in by these trees; they were very close to the house: it almost seemed as though a long arm might have touched them from where she stood. Anything more dull than this aspect could not well be found. Selina leaned from the window to look below: and saw a gravel path with some grass on either side it, but no flowers.

It was a week later. Mr. Radcliffe sat in the parlour, busily examining some samples of new wheat, when there came a loud ring at the outer bell, and presently Stephen Radcliffe walked in. The father and son resembled each other. Both were tall and strongly built, and had the same rugged cast of features: men of few words and ungenial manners. But while Mr. Radcliffe's face was not an unpleasing one, Stephen's had a most sullen—some might have said evil—expression. In his eyes there was a slight cast, and his dull brown hair was never tidy. Some time before this, when the father and son had a quarrel, Stephen had gone off into Cornwall to stay with his mother's relations. This was his first appearance back again.

"Is it you, Stephen!" cried Mr. Radcliffe, without offering to shake hands: for the house was never given to ceremony.

"Yes, it's me," replied Stephen, who generally talked more like a boor than a gentleman, particularly in his angry moods. "It's about time I came home, I think, when such a notice as this appears in the public papers."

He took a newspaper from his pocket, and laid it before his father, pointing with his fore-finger to an announcement. It was that of Mr. Radcliffe's marriage.

"Well?" said Mr. Radcliffe.

"Is that true or a hoax?"

"True."

Stephen caught the paper up again, tore it in two, and flung it across the room.

"What the devil made you go and do such a thing as that?"

"Softly, Ste. Keep a civil tongue in your head. I am my own master."

"At your age!" growled Stephen. "There's no fool like an old fool."

"If you don't like it, you can go back to where you came from," said Mr. Radcliffe quietly, turning the wheat from one of the sample-bags out on the table.

Stephen went to the window, and stood there looking at that agreeable prospect beyond—the trees—his hands in his pockets, his back to his father, and swearing to himself awfully. It would not do to quarrel

implacably with the old man, for his money was at his own disposal: and, if incensed too greatly, he might possibly take the extreme step of leaving it away from him. But Stephen Radcliffe's heart was good to turn his father out of doors there and then, and appropriate the money to himself at once, if he only had the power. "No fool like an old fool!" he again muttered. "Where *is* the cat?"

"Where's who?" cried Mr. Radcliffe, looking up from his wheat.

"The woman you've gone and made yourself a world's spectacle with."

"Ste, my lad, this won't do. Keep a civil tongue in your head, as I bid you; or go where you may make it a foul one. For by heaven!" —and Mr. Radcliffe's passion broke out and he rose from his seat menacingly—"I'll not tolerate this."

Stephen hardly ever remembered his father to have shown passion before. He did not like it. They had gone on so very quietly together, until that quarrel just spoken of, and Stephen had had his own way, and ruled, so to say, in all things, for his father was easy, that this outbreak was something new. It might not do to give further provocation then.

He was standing as before in sullen silence, his hands in his trousers' pockets and the skirts of his short brown velveteen coat thrown back, and Mr. Radcliffe had sat down to the bags again, when the door opened, and some one came in. Stephen turned. He saw a pretty young girl in black, with some books in her delicate hands. Just for an instant he wondered who the young girl could be: and then the thought flashed over him that "the woman" his father had married might have a grown up daughter. Selina had been unpacking her trunks upstairs, and arranging her things in their drawers and closets. She hesitated on her way to the book-case when she saw the stranger.

"My son Stephen, Selina. Ste, Mrs. Radcliffe."

Stephen Radcliffe for a moment forgot his sullenness and his temper. He did nothing but stare. Was his father playing a joke on him? He had pictured the new wife (though he knew not why) as a woman of mature age: this was a child. As she timidly held out the only hand she could extricate from the load of books, he saw the wedding-ring on her finger. Meeting her hand ungraciously and speaking never a word, he turned to the window again. Selina put the books down in a stack to be disposed in their shelves later, and quitted the room.

"This is even worse folly than I dreamed of," began Stephen, facing his father. "She's nothing but a child."

"She is close upon twenty."

"Why, there may be children!" broadly roared out Stephen. "You must have been mad when you did such a deed as this."

"Mad or sane, it's done, Stephen. And I should do it again to-morrow without asking your leave. Understand that."

Yes, it was done. Rattling the silver in his pockets, Stephen Radcliffe felt that, and that there was no undoing it. Here was this young step-mother planted down at the Torr; and if he and she could not hit it off together, it was he who would have to walk out of the house. For full five minutes Stephen mentally rehearsed all the oaths he remembered. Presently he spoke.

"It was a fair trick, wasn't it, that you should forbid my marrying, and go and do the same thing yourself!"

"I did not object to your marrying, Ste: I objected to the girl. Gibbon's daughter is not one to match with you. You are a Radcliffe."

Stephen scoffed. Nobody had ever been able to beat into him any sense of self-importance. Pride of birth, pride in his family were elements unknown to Stephen's nature. He had a great love of money to make up for it.

"What's good for the goose is good for the gander," he retorted, plunging into a communication he had resolved to make. "You have been taking a wife on your score, and I have taken one on mine."

Mr. Radcliffe looked keenly at Stephen. "You have married Gibbon's girl?"

"I have."

"When? Where?"

"In Cornwall. She followed me there."

The elder man felt himself in a dilemma. He did care for his son, and he resented this alliance bitterly for Stephen's sake. Gibbon was gamekeeper to Sir Peter Chanasse, and had formerly been out-door servant at the Torr; and this daughter of his, Rebecca—or Becca, as she was commonly called—was a girl quite beneath Stephen. Neither was she a lovable young woman in herself; but hard, and sly, and bony. How it was that Stephen had fancied her, Mr. Radcliffe could not understand. But—having stolen a march on Stephen himself, in regard to his own marriage, he did not feel much at liberty to resent Stephen's. It was done, too—as he had just observed of his own—and it could not be undone.

"Well, Stephen, I am more vexed for your sake than I care to say. It strikes me you will live to repent it."

"That's my look out," replied Stephen. "I am going to bring her home."

"Home! Where?"

"Here."

Mr. Radcliffe was silent; perhaps the assertion startled him.

"I don't want Gibbon's daughter here, Stephen. There's no room for her."

"Plenty of room, and to spare."

So there was; for the old house was large. But Mr. Radcliffe had not been thinking of space.

"I can't have her. There! You may make your home where you like."

"This is my home," said Stephen.

"And it may be still, if you like. But it's not hers. Two women in a house, each wanting to be mistress, wouldn't do. Now no noise, Ste, *I won't have Gibbon's girl here.* I've not been used to consort with people who have been my servants."

It is one thing to make a resolution, and another to keep it. Before twelve months had gone by, Mr. Radcliffe's firmly spoken words had come to naught; and Stephen had brought his wife into the Torr and two babies—for Mrs. Stephen had presented him with two at once. Selina was upstairs then with an infant of her own, and very ill. The world thought she was going to die.

The opportunity was a grand one for Madam Becca, and she seized upon it. When Selina came about again, after months spent in confinement, she found, so to say, no place for her. Becca was in her place; mistress, and ruler, and all. Stephen behaved to her like the lout he was; Becca, a formidable woman of towering height, alternately snapped at, and ignored her. Old Radcliffe did not interfere: he seemed not to see that anything was amiss. Poor Selina could only sit up in that apartment that Holt had called the Pine Room, and let her tears fall on her baby-boy, and whisper all her griefs into his unconscious ear. She was refined and timid and shrinking: but once she spoke to her husband.

"Treat you with contempt?—don't let you have any will of your own?—thwart you in all ways?" he repeated. "Who says it, Selina?"

"Oh, it is so; you may see that it is, if you only will notice," she said, looking up at him imploringly through her tears.

"I'll speak to Stephen. I knew there'd be a fuss if that Becca came here. But you are not as strong to bustle about as she is, Selina: let her take the brunt of the management off you. What does it matter?"

What did it matter?—that was Mr. Radcliffe's chief opinion on the point: and had it been only a question of management it would not have mattered. He spoke to Stephen, telling him that he and his wife must make things pleasanter for Mrs. Radcliffe, than, as it seemed, they were doing. The consequence was, that Stephen and Becca took a convenient occasion of attacking Selina; calling her a sneak, a tell-tale, and a wolf in sheep's clothing; and pretty nearly frightening her into another spell of illness.

From that time Selina had no spirit to retaliate. She took all that was put upon her—and it was a great deal—and bore it in silence and patience. She saw that her marriage, taking one thing with another, had turned out to be the mistake her friends had foretold that it would

be. Mr. Radcliffe, growing by degrees into a state of apathy as he got older, was completely under the dominion of Stephen. He did not mean to be unkind to his wife: he just perceived nothing; he was indifferent to all that passed around him: had they set fire to Selina's petticoats before his eyes, he'd hardly have seen the blaze. Now and again Selina would try to make friends with Holt: but Holt, though never uncivil, had a way of throwing her off. And so, she lived on a cowed, broken-spirited woman, eating away her heart in silence. Selina Radcliffe had found out that there were worse evils in the world than poverty.

She might have died then but for her boy. You never saw a nicer little fellow than he—that Francis Radcliffe. A bright, tractable, loving boy; with laughing blue eyes, and fair curls falling back from his pretty face. Mr. and Mrs. Stephen hated him. Their children, Tom and Lizzy, pinched and throttled him: but the lad took it all in good part, and had the sweetest temper imaginable. He loved his mother beyond telling, and she made him as gentle and nearly as patient as she was. Virtually driven from the parlour, except at meal times, their refuge was the Pine Room. There they were unmolested. There Selina educated and trained him, doing her best to show him the way to the next world, as well as to fit him for this.

One day when he was about nine years old, Selina was up aloft, in the little room where he slept; which had a better view than some of the rooms had, and looked out into the open country. It was snowy weather, and she caught sight of the two boys in the yard below, snowballing each other. Opening the window to call Francis in—for he always got into the wars when with Tom, and she had learnt to dread his being with him—she saw Stephen Radcliffe crossing from the barn. Suddenly a snow-ball took Stephen in the face. It came from Tom; she saw that; Francis was stooping down at the time, collecting material for a fresh missive.

"Who flung that at me?" roared out Stephen, in a rage.

Tom disclaimed all knowledge of it; and Stephen Radcliffe seized upon Francis, beating him shamefully.

"It was not Francis," called out Selina from the window, shivering at the sight; for Stephen in his violence might sometime, as she knew, lame the lad. "Its touching you was an accident; I could see that; but it was not Francis who threw it."

The cold, rarefied air carried her words distinctly to the ear of Stephen. Holding Francis by one hand to prevent his escape, he told Mrs. Radcliffe that she was a liar, adding other polite epithets and a few oaths. And then he began pummelling the lad again.

"Come in, Francis!—Let him come in!" implored the mother, clasping her hands in her bitter agony. "Oh, is there no refuge for him and for me?"

She ran down to their sanctum, the Pine Room. Francis came up, sore all over, and his face bleeding. He was a brave little lad, and he strove to make light of it, and keep his tears down. She held him to her, and burst into sobs while trying to comfort him. That upset him at once.

"Oh, my darling, try and bear! My poor boy, there's nothing left for us both but to bear. The world is full of wrongs and tribulation: but, Francis, it will all be made right when we get to Heaven."

"Don't cry, mamma. It didn't hurt me much. But, indeed, the snow-ball was not mine."

At ten years old the boys were sent to school. Young Tom, allowed to have his own way, grew beyond everybody's control, even his father's; and Stephen packed him off to school. Selina besought her husband to send Francis also. Why not, replied Mr. Radcliffe; the boy must be educated. And, in spite of Stephen's interfering opposition, Francis was despatched. It was frightfully lonely and unpleasant for Selina after that, and she got to have a pitiful look on her face.

The school was a sharp one, and Francis got on well; he seemed to possess his grandfather Elliot's aptitude for learning. Tom hated it. After each of the half-yearly holidays, it took Stephen himself to get him to school again: and before he was fourteen he capped it all by appearing at home uncalled for, a red-hot fugitive, and announcing an intention of going to sea.

Tom carried his point. After some feats of skirmishing between him and his father, he was shipped off as "midshipman" on board a fine merchantman bound for Hong Kong. Stephen Radcliffe might never have given a consent, but for the certainty that if he did not give it, Tom would decamp from the Torr, as he did from school, and go off as a common seaman before the mast. It was strange, with his crabbed nature, how much he cared for those two children!

"You'll have that other one home now," said sullen Stephen to his father. "No good to be paying for him there."

And most likely it would have been so; but fate, or fortune, intervened. Francis got a wind-fall. A clergyman, who had known Mr. Elliot, died, and left Francis a thousand pounds. Selina decided that it should be spent, or at least a portion of it, in completing his education in a superior manner—though, no doubt, Stephen would have liked to get hold of the money. Francis was sent up to King's College in London, and to board at the house of one of its masters. In this way a few more years passed on. Francis chose the Bar as a profession, and began to study law.

"The Bar!" sneered Stephen. "A penniless beggar like Francis Radcliffe! Put a pig to learn to spell!"

A bleak day in winter. The wind was howling and crying round

Sandstone Torr, tearing through the branches of the nearly leafless trees, whirling the weather-cock atop of the lofty tower, playing madly on the window-panes. If there was one spot in the county that the wind seemed to favour above all other spots, it was the Torr. It would go shrieking in the air round about there like so many unquiet spirits.

In the dusk of evening, on a sofa beside the fire in the Pine Room lay Mrs. Radcliffe, with a white, worn face and hollow eyes. She was slowly dying. Until to-day she had not thought there was any immediate danger: but she knew it all now, and that the end was at hand.

So it was not that knowledge which had caused her, a day or two ago, to write to London for Francis. Some news brought in by Stephen Radcliffe had unhinged and shocked her beyond expression. Francis was leading a loose, bad life, drinking and gambling, and going to the deuce headlong, ran the tales: and Stephen repeated them indoors.

That same night she wrote for Francis. She could not rest day or night until she could see him face to face, and say—Is this true, or untrue? He might have reached the Torr the previous day; but he did not. She was lying listening for him now in the twilight's gloom amid the blasts of that shrieking wind.

"If God had but taken my child in infancy!" came the chief thought of her troubled heart. "If I could but know that I should meet him on the everlasting shores!"

"Mother!"

She started up with a yearning cry. It was Francis. He had arrived, and come up stairs, and his opening of the door had been drowned by the wind. A tall, slender, bright-faced young fellow of twenty, with the same sunny hair as in his childhood, and a genial heart.

Francis halted, and stood in startled consternation. The firelight played on her wasted face, and he saw——what was there. In manners he was still almost a boy; his disposition open, his nature transparent.

She made room for him on the sofa; sitting beside him, and laying her weary head for a moment on his shoulder. Francis took a few deep breaths while getting over the shock.

"How long have you been like this, mother? What has brought it about?"

"Nothing in particular; nothing fresh," she answered. "I have been getting nearer and nearer to it for years and years."

"Is there no hope?"

"None. And oh, my darling, but for you I should be so glad to die. Sitting here in my loneliness for ever, with only Heaven to look forward to, it seems that I have learnt to see a little already of what its Rest will be."

Francis pushed his hair from his brow, and left his hand there. He had loved his mother intensely, and the blow was cruel.

Quietly, holding his other hand in hers, she spoke of what Stephen Radcliffe had heard. Francis's face turned to scarlet as he listened. But in that solemn hour he could not and would not tell a lie.

Yes, it was true; partly true, he said. He was not always so steady as he ought to be. Some of his acquaintances, young men studying law like himself, or medicine, or what not, were rather wild, and he had been the same. Drink?—well, yes; at times they did take more than might be quite needful. But they were not given to gamble: that was false.

"Francis," she said, her heart beating wildly with its pain, "the worst of all is the drink. If once you suffer yourself to acquire a love for it, you may never leave it off. It is so insidious ——"

"But I don't love it, mother; I don't care for it—and I am sure you must know that I would tell you nothing but truth now," he interrupted. "I have only done as the others do. I'll leave it off."

"Will you promise me that?"

"Yes, I will. I do promise it."

She carried his hand to her lips and kissed it. Francis had always kept his promises.

"It is so difficult for young fellows without a home to keep straight in London," he acknowledged. "There's no good influence over us; there's no pleasant family circle where we can spend our evenings: and we go out, and get drawn into this and that. It all comes of thoughtlessness, mother."

"You have promised me, Francis."

"Oh yes. And I will perform."

"How long will it be before you are called to the Bar?" she asked, after a pause.

"Two years."

"So much as that!"

"I think so.—How the wind howls!"

Mrs. Radcliffe sighed; Francis's future seemed not to be very clear. Unless he could get on pretty quickly, and make a living for himself——

"When I am gone, Francis," she said aloud, interrupting her own thoughts, "this will not be any home for you."

"It has not been one for me for some years now, mother."

"But if you do not get nto work soon, and your own funds come to an end, you will have no home but this to turn to."

"If I attempted to turn to it, Stephen would soon make it too hot for me, I expect."

"That might not be all; not the worst," she quickly answered, dropping her voice to a tone of fear, and glancing around like one in a fever.

Francis looked round too. He supposed she was seeking something.

"It is always scaring me, Francis," she whispered. "There are times when I fancy I am going to see it enacted before my eyes. It puts me into a state of nervous dread indescribable."

"See what enacted?" he asked.

"I sitting was here about ten days ago, Francis, thinking of you, thinking of the future, when all at once a most startling prevision—yes, I call it so—a prevision came upon me of some dreadful ill in store for you; ill wrought by Stephen. I—I am not sure but it was—that—that he took your life," she added, scarcely above her breath, and in a tone that made Francis shiver.

"Why, what do you mean, mother?"

"Every day, every day since, every night and nearly all night, that strange conviction has lain upon me. I know it will be fulfilled: when the hand of death is closing on us, these previsions are an instinct. As surely as that I am now disclosing this to you, Francis, so surely will you fall in some way under the iron hand of Stephen."

"Perhaps you were dreaming, mother dear," suggested Francis: for he had his share of common sense.

"It will be in this house; the Torr," she went on, paying no attention to him; "for it is always these rooms and the dreary trees outside that seem to lie before me. For that reason, I would not have you live here ——"

"But don't you think you may have been dreaming?" repeated Francis, interrupting the rest.

"I was as wide awake as I am now, Francis, but I was deep in thought. It stole upon me, this impression, without any kind of warning, or any train of ideas that could have led to it; and it lies within me, a sure and settled conviction. *Beware of Stephen.* But oh, Francis! even while I give you this caution, I know that you will not escape the evil—whatever it may turn out to be."

"I hope I shall," he said, rather lightly. "I'll try, at any rate."

"Well, I have warned you, Francis. Be always upon your guard. And keep away from the Torr, if you can."

Holt, quite an aged woman now, came in with some tea for her mistress. Francis took the opportunity to go down and see his father. Mr. Radcliffe, in a shabby old coat, was sitting in his arm-chair at the parlour fire. He looked pleased to see Francis, and kept his hand for a minute after he had shaken it.

"My mother is very ill, sir," said Francis.

"Ay," replied the old man, dreamily. "Been so for some time now."

"Can nothing be done to—to—keep her with us a little longer, father?"

"I suppose not. Ask Duffham."

"What the devil!—is it you! What brings *you* here?"

The coarse salutation came from Stephen. Francis turned to see him enter and bang the door after him. His shoes were dirty, his beaver gaiters splashed, and his hair was like a tangled mop.

"I came down to see my father and mother," answered Francis, as he held out his hand. But Stephen did not choose to see it.

Mrs. Stephen, in a straight-down blue cloth gown and black cap garnished with red flowers, looking more angular and hard than of yore, came in with the tea-tray. She did as much work in the house as a servant. Lizzy had been married the year before, and lived in Birmingham with her husband, who was curate at one of the churches there.

"You'll have to sleep on the sofa to-night, young man," was Mrs. Stephen's snappish salutation to Francis. "There's not a bed in the house that's aired."

"The sofa will do," he answered.

"Let his bed be aired to-morrow, Becca," interposed the old man. And they stared in astonishment to hear him say it.

Francis sat down to the tea-table with Stephen and his wife; but neither of them spoke a word to him. Mr. Radcliffe had his tea in his arm-chair at the fire, as usual. Afterwards, Francis took his hat and went out. He was going to question the doctor: and the wind came rushing and howling about him as he bore onwards down the lane towards Church Dykely.

In about an hour's time he came back again with red eyes. He said it was the wind, but his subdued voice sounded as though he had been crying. His father, with bent head, was smoking a long pipe; Stephen sat at the table, reading the sensational police reports in a low weekly newspaper.

"Been out for a stroll, lad?" asked old Radcliffe—and it was the first voluntary question he had put for months. Stephen, listening, could not think what was coming to him.

"I have been to Duffham's," answered Francis. "He—he—" with a stopping of the breath, "says that nothing can be done for my mother; that a few days now will see the end of it."

"Ay," quietly responded the old man. "Our turns must all come."

"*Her* turn ought not to have come yet," said Francis, nearly breaking down.

"No?"

"I have been looking forward at odd moments to a time when I should be in work, and able to give her a happy home with me, father. It is very hard to come here and find *this*."

Old Radcliffe took a long whiff; and, opening his mouth, let the smoke curl aloft. "Have a pipe, Francis?"

"No, thank you, sir. I am going up to my mother."

As he left the room, Stephen, having finished the police reports, was

turning the paper to see what it said about the markets, when his father put down his pipe and began to speak.

"Only a few days, he says, Ste!"

"What?" demanded Stephen in his surly and ungracious tones.

"She's been ailing always; and has sat up there away from us, Ste. But we shall miss her."

"Miss her!" retorted Ste, leaving the paper, and walking to the fire. "Why, what good has she been of? *Miss* her? The house'll have a good riddance of her," he added, under his breath.

"It'll be my turn next, Ste. And not long first, either."

Stephen took a keen look at his father from beneath his over-hanging, bushy eyebrows, that were beginning to turn grey: All this sounded very odd.

"When you and me and Becca's left alone here by ourselves, we shall be as easy as can be," he said.

"What month is it, Ste?"

"November."

"Ay. You'll have seen the last o' me before Christmas."

"Think so?" was Stephen's equable remark. The old man nodded; and there came a pause.

"And you and Becca 'll be glad to get us out, Ste."

Stephen did not take the trouble to gainsay it. He was turning about in his thoughts something that he had a mind to speak of.

"They've been nothing but interlopers from the first—she and him. I expect you to do what's right by me, father."

"Ay, I shall do what's right," answered the old man.

"About the money, I mean. It must *all* come to me, father. I was heir to it before you ever set eyes on her; and her brat must not be let stand in my way. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear. It'll be all right, Ste."

"Take only a fraction from the income, and how would the Torr be kept up?" pursued Stephen, plucking up his spirits at the last answer. "He has got his fine profession, and he can make a living for himself out on't: some o' them councillors make their thousands a year. But he must not be let rob *me*."

"He shan't rob you, Ste. It will be all right."

And covetous Stephen, thus reassured and put at ease, strolled into the kitchen, and ordered Becca to provide his favourite dish, toasted cheese, for supper.

The "few days" spoken of by Mr. Duffham, were slowly passing. There was not much difference to be observed in Selina; except that her voice went sinking down like a spent sky-rocket. She could only use it at intervals. But her face got a beautiful look of radiant peace upon it, just as though she were three parts in Heaven. I have heard Duffham say so many a time since; I, Johnny Ludlow.

On the fifth day she was so much better that it seemed little short of a miracle. They found her in the Pine Room early, up and dressed: when Holt went in to light the fire, she was looking over the two books that lay on the round table. One of them was the Bible; the other was a translation of the German tale "Sintram," which Francis had brought her when he came down the last summer. The story had taken hold of her imagination, and she nearly knew it by heart.

Down stairs went Holt, and told them that the mistress (for, contradictory though it may seem, Selina had been always accorded that title) had taken a "new lease of life," and was getting well. Becca, astonished, went stalking up: perhaps she was afraid it might be true. Selina had "Sintram" in her hand as she sat: her eyes looked bright, her cheeks pink, her voice was improved.

"Oh," said Becca. "What have you left your bed for at this early hour?"

"I feel so well," Selina answered with a smile, letting the book lie open on the table. "Won't you shake hands with me?—and—and kiss me?"

Now Becca had never kissed her in all the years they had lived together, and she did not seem to care about beginning now. "I'll go down and beat you up an egg and a spoonful of wine," said she, just touching the tips of Selina's fingers, in response to the held-out hand: and, with that, got away.

Stephen was the only one who did not pay the Pine Room a visit that day. He heard of the surprising change while he was feeding the pigs: for Becca went out and told him. Stephen splashed some wash over the side of the trough, and gave a little pig a smack with the bucket, and that was all his answer. Old Radcliffe sat; an hour in the room; but he never spoke all the while: so his company could not be considered as much.

Selina crept as far as the window, and looked out on the bare pines and the other dreary trees. Most trees are dreary in November. Francis saw a shiver take her as she stood, leaning on the window frame; and he went to give her his arm and bring her back again. They were by themselves then.

"A week, or so, of this improvement, mother, and you will be as you used to be," said he cheerfully, seating her on the sofa and stirring up the fire. "We shall have our home together yet."

She turned her face full on his, as he sat down by her; a half-questioning, half-wondering look in her eyes.

"Not in this world, Francis. Surely *you* are not deceived!" and his over-sanguine heart went down like lead.

"It is but the flickering-up of the spirit before it finally quits the weary frame; just as you may have seen the flame shoot up from an expiring candle," she continued. "The end is very near now."

A spasm of pain rose in his throat. She took his hands between her own feeble ones.

"Don't grieve, Francis; don't grieve for me! Remember what my life has been."

He did remember it. He remembered also the answer Duffham gave when he had inquired what malady it was his mother was dying of. "A broken heart."

"Don't forget, Francis—never forget—that it is a journey we must enter on, sooner or later."

"An uncertain and unknown journey at the best!" he said. "You have no fear of it?"

"Fear! No, but I had once."

She spoke the words in a low, sweet tone, and pointed with a smile to the book that still lay open on the table. Francis's eyes fell on the page.

"When death is drawing near,
And thy heart shrinks with fear,
And thy limbs fail,
Then raise thy hands and pray
To Him who cheers the way
Through the dark vale.

"Seest thou the eastern dawn?
Hears't thou, in the red morn,
The angel's song?
Oh! lift thy drooping head,
Thou who in gloom and dread
Hast lain so long.

"Death comes to set thee free;
Oh! meet him cheerily,
As thy true friend;
And all thy fears shall cease,
And in eternal peace
Thy penance end."

Francis sat very still, struggling a little with that lump in his throat. She leaned forward, and let her head rest upon him, just as she had done the other day when he first came in. His emotion broke loose then.

"Oh, mother, what shall I do without you?"

"You will have God," she whispered.

Still all the morning she kept up well; talking of this, talking of that, saying how much of late the verses, just quoted, had floated in her mind and become a reality to her; showing Holt a slit that had appeared in the table-cover and needed darning telling Francis his pocket-handkerchiefs looked yellow and should be bleached. It might have been thought she was only going out to tea at Church Dykely, instead of entering on the other journey she had told of.

"Have you been giving her anything?" demanded Stephen, casting his surly eyes on Francis as they sat opposite to each other at dinner in the parlour. "Dying people can't spurt up in this manner without drugs to make 'em spurt."

Francis did not deign to answer. Stephen projected his fork, and took a potato out of the dish. Frank went upstairs when the meal was over. He had left his mother sitting on the sofa, comparatively well. He found her lying on the bed in the next room, grappling with death. She lifted her feeble arms to welcome him, and a ray of joyous light shone on her face. Francis made hardly one step of it to the bed.

"Oh, my darling, it will be all right!" she breathed. "I have prayed for you, and I know—I know I have been heard. You will be helped to put away that evil habit; temptation may assail, but it will not finally overcome you. And, Francis, when——" Her voice failed.

"I no longer hear what you say, mother," cried Francis in an agony.

"Yes, yes," she repeated, as if in answer to something he had said. "Beware of Stephen."

The hands and face alike fell. Francis rang the bell violently, and Holt came up. All was over.

Stephen attended the funeral with the others. Grumbling wofully at having to do it, because it involved a new suit of black clothes. "They'll be ready for the old man, though," was his consoling reflection: "he won't be long."

He was even quicker than Stephen thought. On the very day week that they had come in from leaving Selina in the grave, Mr. Radcliffe was lying as lifeless as she was. A seizure carried him off. Francis was summoned again from London before he had well got back to it. Stephen could not, at such a season, completely ignore him.

He did not foresee the blow that was to come thundering down. When Mr. Radcliffe's will came to be opened, it was found that his property was equally divided between the two sons, half and half: Stephen of course inheriting the Torr; and Squire Todhetley being appointed trustee for Francis. "And I earnestly beg of him to accept the trust," ran the words, "for the sake of Selina's son."

Francis caught the glare of Stephen as they were read out. It was of course Stephen himself, but it looked more like a savage pole-cat. That warning of his mother's came into Francis's mind with a rush.

And you will hear more next month. A happy New Year to you all.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

# A NIGHT IN A MONASTERY.

By the Author of "A Month at Gastein."

STARTING from Charing Cross, we reached Dover at the appointed time. The sea was perfectly calm; not a ripple on the water, which had a hazy, dreamy, hot, contented, liquid look upon its surface: a look suggestive of summer, and sunshine, and bright blue skies, and happiness. Yet it was not a summer month; only summer weather: for it was Tuesday, the first of April, 1873, and the trees all down the line had scarcely put off their wintry aspect. The passage across was delightful; the journey between Calais and Paris, as usual, tedious, but accomplished at last.

I had been in Paris at the commencement of the war, but not since the siege and commune. Most people who had had that pleasure said it was very different from the Paris of old: a scene of ruins: of desolation; of heartbroken people, and melancholy faces, and sad tones. I saw nothing of this. Ruins there were; some of them sad enough, but there was little beyond to tell of what Paris had gone through. The people—old friends and acquaintances—and new ones—were as lively as of old; as gay and lighthearted; just as merry. The theatres each night were crowded to suffocation. As much laughter was going on in them, as much applauding: as many witty sallies and gay dresses adorned the foyers, as in the prosperous days of the Empire.

The trees in the Tuileries gardens, as seen from the windows of Meurice's Hotel, looked as bright and beautiful as in the days gone by. They were just bursting into leaf, and between the cracks and chinks you could catch the dancing sunlight, the small twigs and branches intersecting each other like veins in marble. In the afternoons the gardens were alive with mothers, and children, and nurses, all rejoicing in the hot, fair weather, the light atmosphere, the glowing skies. Nothing could more perfectly have resembled old Paris. Not a sign of gloom, or misery, or death, or poverty, or decay.

Yet the death and suffering of the siege and commune were not exaggerated. One old friend, a native of Paris, living in the Avenue d'Antin, a rich old man of seventy-seven, told me about it. He was at home during the siege.

"I could not get away from Paris," said he. "I was starving nearly all the time; I had very little but black bread to live upon: and that to a man of my age, who had never known privations of any sort, was no slight calamity. I did not dare go out of doors, or put my head out of window for fear of the shells. One morning, more venturesome than usual, I know not why, I hazarded a short stroll towards the Barrière de l'Etoile. Crack! a shell came over on to the roof of a

house, exploded, carrying with it roofs and chimney pots, smashing windows, and shaking the very ground itself. You need not ask whether I was terrified: my teeth chattered. I am an old man now, and I have been young once; but though in those by-gone days I may have made more speed, certainly I never hurried more. As fast as my old legs would take me, I returned to the shelter of my own roof, and left it no more until the siege was over."

"And the commune?" I inquired. "How did you support that? There were dangers also to encounter?"

"Yes," he answered. "Some of them greater than those of the siege, for in it lay still greater madness and wickedness. It is awful to contemplate how quickly the French turn themselves into wild beasts."

"And the women were worse than the men?"

"The women!" he cried. "Do not speak of them. Women were made to be angels, but when they become bad they are worse than demons. They hesitate at nothing."

"You, however, happily escaped them?" I asked.

"I was away," he answered. "As soon as ever the siege was over I left Paris. Not without difficulty and danger; but still I got away. I was thoroughly ill from the miseries and privations I had endured, and felt that nothing but change of air would restore me. So I went."

"Well?" I said, as he paused.

"I am telling you," he answered, somewhat fretfully at the interruption. "I went to St. Germain. The air there is pure, you know, and I thought I should succeed in getting a couple of comfortable rooms. Not at all. Every room in the place was occupied by people who had left Paris. For several days I had to sleep in a stable—fancy being reduced to that! At last I managed to get a room in a cabaret: a horrible little estaminet; so dirty, so poor, with so bad a reputation that no one would venture into it. Be it what it may, I thought, it cannot be worse than a stable. So I took the room, and lived there, miserably, for a whole month. Before the end of that time the Commune had had its life and death."

"And you were none the worse for it?"

"Not much. Once or twice reports reached me that the houses I possess in this neighbourhood had been destroyed by these savages; but when I returned to Paris I found that whilst many other proprietors had suffered, the Commune had spared me."

"You came back all the better for your change?"

"Yes; in spite of the privations and anxieties I had gone through; the miseries of that horrible cabaret. I suppose they did their best for me; and then there was the pure air and the change. Since then, I have been living quietly, and now I am as well as ever I was."

"I felt doubtful whether I should find you alive or dead," I remarked to another old friend, of whom I had not had tidings since the siege.

"Little wonder," was the reply. "I was more likely to be dead than living, perhaps. But, as it happened, I was out of Paris during the whole of the siege. I was quite in the south of France, and could not manage to get back in time. I should not have grieved at that, but my wife was here, and I knew not what would become of her. Part of the time—just imagine !—she had to take refuge with others in the cellars of our railway stations ; and whilst crouching up in the corners, they could hear the cries of the wounded and dying in the streets."

It can scarcely be wondered at that the most inveterate hatred against the Prussians filled their hearts. I entered a shop one morning for one of the Tauchnitz books : a Librairie where I had many a time bought them in the past.

"A Tauchnitz book !" cried the master—who was rarely present —aghast and glaring. "I have not one. I have swept every sign of them away as I would sweep away the plague."

"But why ?" I asked, in doubt.

"Because they are German," he muttered in an undertone, something like distant thunder. "Because I hate everything German. Because everything German ought to go to the bad. I pant for the day when we shall return with interest the debt we owe that people."

And he did pant. His heart seemed to swell, his eyes to blaze almost with insane fire. Yet he was a highly educated, calm-judging man : a bookseller only for the time being, and sub rosâ ; in reality a partner in one of the most important publishing houses in the world.

In the old days, amongst a certain class, but a very large one : that class who are restless, never contented with what is, be it ever so good : the sore point was the Empire ; the object of hatred the Emperor. Now they leave him in peace ; not a few even regret him, though secretly ; and could he but rise from his grave, make war against the Germans and return a conqueror, the whole population would exalt him into a saint, and for a time give him the chief place in their hearts.

Last April the Republic was new ; the President had used his power wisely ; and it was popular. Upon every public building was written, in large, defiant capitals, "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." The empire, as far as possible, had been sponged out ; the statues and busts of the Napoleons had been rudely hurled from their pedestals and swept away. "The Republic is our last chance," was the cry. "If the Empire is restored, no matter who reigns, France will be lost for ever."

Amongst the saddest of the ruins was the Hôtel de Ville, which can never be restored in all its beauty. During the day-time it was just then a scene of great excitement, if not of gaiety. The conscription was taking place. Hundreds—thousands—of young men were going in and out of the little wooden gate of the temporary palisades to their fate. To those who longed and prayed for exemption from serving in the army, the passing through must have been a terrible ordeal : the

interval between waiting and drawing far worse than the mauvais quart d'heure of proverbial quotation. A perpetual and vast crowd was collected outside; and as each young fellow came forth from the fiery trial, he was, if happy enough to have drawn a high number, seized upon by kinsmen and acquaintances, and kissed and hugged in an absurdly excited manner. If the contrary, and the unlucky youth came back with a low number, a party of equally luckless young men would seize upon him; and linking arms, five or six in a row, their numbers stuck conspicuously in their caps, they would patrol the streets in a desperate mood, singing and assuming jollity: or, hiring a fiacre, would drive about in a reckless way not pleasant to see: bribing the coachman with an extra pour-boire to rattle them over the stones as if the very demon of destruction was in pursuit.

Whether Empire or Republic sways the rod of power, still they must have the conscription; and laws, and judgments, and condemnations, and taxes: and no more freedom in the latter state than in the former, notwithstanding their oft-repeated motto. There is no real liberty; the equality is that every man is trying to do the best for himself; the fraternity measures itself by the same standard; and when they get to realize this, they grow tired and dissatisfied with a Republic, and again it yields to a King or Emperor. It has always been so; with a people so constituted it always will be.

I had friends living down towards the south, in Grenoble, and suddenly the idea crossed me to go and see them. I would walk in upon them unexpectedly and take them by storm. To accomplish this I started one night at eight o'clock, by the Marseilles express, from the Gare de Lyon. The night journey was dark, but I was familiar with the surrounding country, which even in daylight possesses but little beauty to attract the traveller. The first part lies through the valleys of the Seine, Yonne, Armonçon, Brenne, and Oze. The word valley is apt, in spite of many contrary experiences, to conjure up to the mind a picture of beauty: slopes, and green pastures; rivulets whose rippling sounds form the most fitting accompaniment to the songs of the birds; the abode of all that is soft and lovely and lovable in nature. Here you get little of this. The outlook is monotonous for mile after mile. And knowing this I preferred taking the night express, the fastest train on the line.

The night looked gloomy enough as we went forth into the dark. About half-past one we reached Dijon, and here I got down with the rest of the travellers who were not sunk in sloth or slumber, and looked about me a moment before entering the buffet.

I wanted this moment to reconnoitre and think. I had last been at the station three years ago at the commencement of the unhappy war, and what a different scene it had then presented. Now, calm, and dark, and closed. Then, every room, every hole and corner open,

flaring away with gas. The waiting-rooms crowded with troops, lying and thrown about in all directions : Zouaves and Turcos who did not resemble human beings : who very likely fought like wild beasts, which they did resemble : many of them lying about drunk or asleep, in every attitude of abandonment. A picture so vivid that it is hardly possible to recall it without a shiver.

I stood so long on the platform, drawing comparisons between that past time and the present, that I scarcely left myself a moment for a bowl of coffee. Scarcely was it poured out, hot and steaming, when the bell rang and the passengers frantically rushed away. After swallowing the coffee and paying for it, the train doors were closed, and the engine was preparing to start. To my infinite vexation, I could not find my own compartment, of which I had omitted to take the number, and where in a comfortable corner I had left rugs and books. I went up and down, looking in here and peering in there, feeling very hurried and unsettled. But it was hopeless. The carriage was not to be found. The guards were raging and storming. At last, despairing, I opened a door, and was thrust back with an intimation in broad English tones—"No room." It must have been a mistake, to speak politely, on the part of those travellers, for there were but four of them. But there was no time to argue the point. On, to the next compartment. The curtains had been carefully closed, the red shield drawn over the lamp. I was met with a howl of consternation—a quartette of horror—and the words "Pour dames seules!"

Four ladies, of uncertain age, reclined in the four corners. One of them, having disencumbered herself of a front of flaxen curls, and a set of teeth, which were gingerly placed beside her, had enveloped her head in a nightcap with broad frills. No sooner did she catch sight of one of the opposite sex (perfidious monsters!), invading the sanctum, than she gave vent to one of the most piercing shrieks ever uttered, and bobbed her head under a shawl. Although the train was in motion, they would not let me in. The guard, with an amused laugh, broad enough to have driven a vain woman insane, pulled me back, opened the door of the next compartment, and launched me in like an arrow. Room there, and to spare, but of comfort little. The night was chilly; my rug was probably appropriated by somebody else, and turned into a blanket; so I had to sit shivering. We made progress, and at half-past seven reached Lyons. I secured my property, and left the Marseilles express for the line branching off to Grenoble.

The change, in the matter of speed, was not for the better. There were numerous stations on the line, and we halted at each : at some of them loitering away as much as ten minutes, where perhaps one passenger would get in and one alight. So much unnecessary time is allowed these trains that, in spite of all the slow speed and loitering, they still travel too quickly for the time-tables.

The journey was monotonous, the scenery tame, until we drew towards Grenoble, when it changed its aspect, and we entered the valley of the Isère, one of the most beautiful and fertile in France: luxuriant and abundant in vegetation. Here, it is surrounded by the Alps, many of which are cultivated and tilled far up the heights, yielding a rich produce. The crops for the most part are corn, clover, and hemp: the latter, for which the valley is celebrated, growing to a great height. The luxuriant beauty of the valley is only apparent when vegetation is advanced; when the fruit trees are in blossom; when the wind sweeps lightly over the waving ears of corn; when the vines are laden with their rich, graceful bunches. Each successive month and season brings its own peculiar harvest to perfection. The vines here are, for the most part, hung from tree to tree, in festoons, and are trained over wooden trellis-work; a more picturesque mode of cultivation than running them up poles, as in the vineyards of the Rhine, and after the manner of our English hop-gardens. But even this is still infinitely inferior in effect to the vineyards of Southern Tyrol and Italy.

It was only when very close upon Grenoble that the old town unfolded itself. A great precipitous mountain buttress stood forth most provokingly in the way. But at last, at half-past eleven, the train steamed noisily and languidly into the station. I found myself by no means sorry to part company with so much irritating inactivity.

"Now for it!" thought I. Surprises are the lot of man, and my friends who, when they thought of me at all, thought me safe in England (I had not even sent them word that I was in Paris), would be somewhat astonished this morning. It was midday, and they were seated at déjeûner when I rang the bell. Quietly putting aside the astonished waiting-maid who answered the summons, and who afterwards confided to her mistress that for doing so she had at first thought me "le plus joliment malhonnête monsieur qu'elle avait jamais de la vie vue," I opened the door of the salle-à-manger and walked in.

Ghosts do not move with a clatter; neither, as a rule, do they appear in travelling gear, with begrimed faces and disordered locks: but as I stood there for a moment, motionless, taking in the scene and barbarously enjoying their consternation, I know that in the first instance, without stopping to reason, or weigh probabilities, they did both insanely and wildly believe that they beheld a spectre.

"Mon frère!" (This exclamation should by rights be printed in largest capitals. Nothing less could give any idea of the tone or look by which it was accompanied. And this would do it but faintly.)

At the same time H. dropped his knife and fork, sprang up, and turned pale as whitewash; his jaw, I thought, was about to fall, his eyes to close; and I, alarmed, felt half inclined to send the gaping waiting-maid for a doctor, when H. came to. Hands were clasped; hearts beat with pleasurable emotion; his pretty wife came round and

actually kissed me in spite of the dust and dirt of a sixteen hours' journey. I was made le bien-venu.

"I could not make it out," H. kept repeating every few moments, in a vague, abstracted, soliloquizing manner, not saying much for the balance of his mind. "Could not make it out. Thought some of you at home must be ill."

And I believe he did not quite make it out all the time I remained: for he persisted during the whole of that visit in producing from his capacious cellar, Chambertin at a guinea a bottle: in spite of all the powerful but hypocritical arguments I felt it my duty to advance against so mad and ruinous a proceeding.

Gradually we settled down; and, hungry as a hunter, I fell-to with a good will upon the savoury things before me, Chambertin included. But it was hard work to satisfy my own hunger and at the same time their thirst for home news. All went well, nevertheless, until a small voice from a distant chamber smote upon our ears.

"Ventre affamé n'a point d'oreilles," says a French proverb. That proverb is a delusion.

"Ah ha!" said M., her eyes lighting up with the glow of maternal pride. "Mademoiselle is awaking."

In a moment or two a small vision of beauty trotted into the room, her cheeks flushed with sleep; opened great big hazel eyes at the ruffianly looking stranger, and ran to mamma for protection. But ere long she made firm friends: and when a ball, and a doll, and a beautiful white curly dog with a long tail, that barked, and showed his red rag of a tongue, and went upon wheels, had made successive inroads upon her tender heart and lively fancy, she went clean over to the enemy; ready and willing at a moment's notice to desert home, and mamma and papa, and come over to England with the said ruffian.

"See how delicate and thin she is," said M. in a pitiable voice. "For months and months we despaired of her life; day and night, night and day, we were in attendance upon her: and now she has to be fed thrice daily upon raw meat."

I fancy a half-stifled sigh rushed up the chimney away into the clouds at sight of the cherub. So time rolls on, thought I, somewhat sentimentally, bringing its chances and changes. Yesterday, boys and girls at home; life a long unbroken chain of happiness, though we knew not then *how* happy. To-day, men and women: scattered, married and given in marriage: olive branches springing up around: the old home left, the old nest by some deserted. And, oh, sirs! never again in after life can any nest be quite the same; any notes be quite so sweet as the mother's gentle tones; any eyes be quite so true; any influence be so abiding. Passion springs up in the heart of man, and love for woman, which is strong and pure and sweet too, or ought to be; which, too, has its influence in after life for weal or woe. But far

away down in the heart there is a memory that never dies; a love that never grows old; a face and a tone that, whether present or absent, linger for ever and ever in the soul.

In this after life there may be blessings innumerable; a Benjamin's share of happiness: but where are the old hopes and dreams? where the bright couleur de rose that in those former times enveloped the distant life and the future? The trees are green; they bud and blossom; the sky is blue; the sun shines, we have spring and autumn; summer and winter: nothing outwardly seems changed. But the rose-glow has fled for ever.

The next day, Sunday, was spent quietly, as it is just and fitting Sunday should be spent. It was arranged that on the following day, Monday, H. and I should together visit the Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, distant some thirty miles from Grenoble; embedded far away up amongst the pine forests of the Alps; a place I had long desired to see.

There were various ways of reaching the Grande Chartreuse, and we finally decided that, all things considered, our wisest plan would be to take the omnibus as far as St. Laurent du Pont, a small village about ten miles from the monastery, lying at the foot of the long, narrow gorge or defile leading up to it.

The omnibus started at half-past six, and on Monday morning soon after five we were on the alert.

"I wish I was going with you," said M., who was occupied with household cares for our benefit; seeing that hot coffee was being prepared and a bountiful table spread. "What a shame of those terrible old monks not to admit ladies within their walls! How barbarous and unrefined they must grow! Come, C., it's six o'clock. Take your coffee and some of this delicious pâté de foie gras."

"Could we not dress you up as a man and smuggle you in?" I suggested, obeying her commands. "You are not tall, and might pass very well for a boy."

"And my hair!" cried M., with quite a diminutive shriek of vanity. "Cut it off for a pack of uncivilized monks? Le jeu ne vaudrait pas la chandelle."

So H. and I started for the omnibus, which we found on the very point of departure. "How glorious!" I exclaimed. "Not a passenger inside. We have it all to ourselves."

It was a short-lived glory. By-and-by there got in a man who had evidently been making his breakfast on a dish of garlic, the popular luxury of the pays there. H., whose olfactory nerves had become of necessity somewhat less sensitive to the prevalence of this agreeable perfume, though *he* found it bad enough that morning, grinned as the man entered. "Now you're in for it," said he. "I will do violence to my inclinations, and for your sake light up." This generous self-

sacrifice (which ended in smoke) was of some service; but it was impossible completely to extinguish the fumes of garlic even by the fumes of tobacco, until the departure of the man himself. This took place in about three-quarters of an hour, and the "bon voyage" we dismissed him with was at any rate a hearty one.

From the first the morning had not been fine, but it became much worse as the day progressed. Much of the interest of the road and scenery was destroyed by the rain, which began steadily to come down. By degrees the clouds thickened and darkened, and wrapped themselves round the tops of the mountains, and rolled down into the valleys with most depressing and gloomy persistency. Yet in spite of this the drive could not be otherwise than pleasant and picturesque. The horses trotted at a good round pace, jingling their collar-bells: a perpetual sound that would be insupportable in the streets of London, but seeming almost musical and well-placed amidst the mountains: bringing to mind that scene in Dalilah so famously acted and put upon the stage of the Théâtre Français in Paris.

(In the distance you hear this sound of bells: a car is rapidly journeying through the mountains. Two men are visible on the stage. One has deceived a pure-minded girl who loved him, and whom he loved: jilted her for a worthless woman, who in turn leaves him for another. His first love dies of a broken heart, and he repents too late. The car contains her body, which her father is conveying back to their own country. The man who has done this harm sees the car in the distance, does not recognize the inmate, and, mistaking it for some one else, shouts. The bells cease, the car stops, the old, white-haired man climbs up a steep embankment to the foot of a large wayside cross. "Que voulez-vous, messieurs," says he in a heartbroken voice, unable to recognize them in the gloom. "Que voulez-vous de moi? Ma fille est morte. Oui, messieurs, elle est morte!"—a whole world of misery in his tones. "Je ramène son pauvre corps près de sa mere." They recognize the voice: guess the truth. The friend makes some excuse and bids him depart. The old man passes them and disappears behind the mountain. The bells are again heard, faint and fainter, as the car proceeds onwards with its melancholy burden. The lover, who has long been at death's door, unable to bear this last shock, expires, faithful in death to his first love, his arms extended towards her remains. The whole scene, acted as it could be acted nowhere else, is full of excitement.)

On first leaving Grenoble the road was tolerably straight and smooth. The mountains to the right were close upon us; those to the left farther off, and the valley, had the weather been fine, gave promise of much beauty. Here and there upon the heights stood out an unpretending modern château, or the ruins of an old castle, grey-stained with time. Now a patriarchal couple, looking at least a hundred-and-

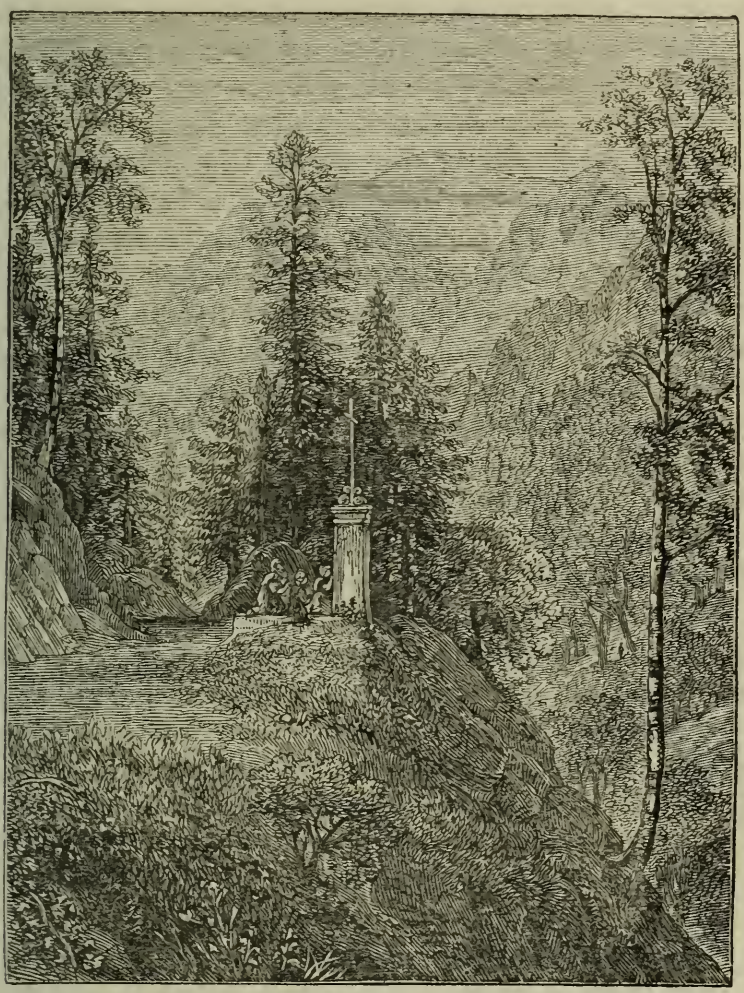
twenty years old, shrivelled and bowed, the woman wearing an enormous straw-bonnet of the pays peculiar to its people; tramping their difficult way from one village to another. Now a small waggon drawn by oxen yoked together in a curious, but not very picturesque, fashion. Oxen here are very generally employed, and in light waggons and carts, for the most part, take the place of horses. Heavy, sleepy-eyed animals, but no doubt strong to labour. Now a village itself is passed, poor looking and dirty; the children—I suppose children are

On the Road to the Monastery.—I.

the same all the world over—grubbing in the mud, making dirt pies, and rolling over door-sills; a few of them fighting and howling like little demons: for a moment arresting their interesting little games to look after the clattering omnibus, with open mouths, and begrimed faces, and shock heads. In places bold mountain crags stood out bare, barren, and rocky. In many parts the pines grew thick and dense; and, again, in spots the sides up to a certain height were cultivated with the luxuriance almost of a garden of the real south.

Journeying onwards, the road began to ascend, and the rain, to make

things even, came down more fiercely. Still ascending, flakes of snow mingled themselves with the rain-drops. The wind rushed down with no slight or kindly hand between the mountain pass, and crept in through our windows and underneath collars and great coats. What unpleasant and provoking weather it was ! The ascent continued for some miles, in parts exceedingly steep, and before we reached the top the rain had entirely given place to snow, which, in huge flakes, fell thick and fast. It was wonderful how the horses struggled upwards,



Croix Verte. On the way to the Monastery.—II.

battling with the ascent and the elements and the heavy, slushy road: never so much as pausing to take breath, though thin and dilapidated looking. But perseverance brings even up-hill work to an end; the ascent was over at last; then some rapid descending, in which the snow again gave place to torrents of rain; a spell of level road, and we awoke the echoes of St. Laurent du Pont.

Here we were under the necessity of exchanging the omnibus for some other vehicle. It might be anything; from a cart to a barouche. How we bemoaned the weather, and our untoward fate in having

pitched upon this miserable day for the expedition. It had certainly been cloudy even at the commencement; but H., who affects weather-wisdom, felt convinced, from certain signs he took much trouble to point out to me, and which I vainly strained eyesight to discover, that the morning would turn out splendidly. We started, with the result seen.

At St. Laurent du Pont we entered the café, whilst the omnibus-driver went in search of a vehicle to take us up to the monastery. It was his business to do this, not ours; the omnibus-office in Grenoble undertakes to convey you to the Grande Chartreuse, and to furnish the necessary means of doing so. In about twenty minutes, while indulging in some of the liqueur manufactured by the monks, there was a rattling heard over stones, a sound of hoofs, and our carriage, with quite a fashionable dash and uproar, stood at the door.

Of all the wretched vehicles ever drawn by pitiable cattle this was the worst. Something after the fashion of a French cabriolet. It went upon two wheels to begin with: and, in respect of comfort, it may be admitted, without argument, that, under certain conditions, two wheels for two people may be made to serve all the purposes of four. But the conditions were absent. No springs; a back seat, under cover of a hood, for messieurs les voyageurs; a front seat, beyond the shelter of the hood, for the coachman; the back seat stuffed, the stuffing wet; the front seat a board, the board soaked. We had no rug with us, an insane omission; and they found a substitute that must have reposed on the rooftop of the coach-house all the previous night. Behind us, in the back of the machine, was a window, about nine inches square, "Seems draughty," said H., when we had journeyed a few yards, shrugging his shoulders, and turning up his coat collar with a shiver. I thought so too, and, turning, touched the window. Nothing but empty space and air. It was a hole; the window was broken, and had been carefully removed, affording a perfect system of ventilation. "Lively," said H. "Shan't forget this in a hurry; especially if a fellow gets laid up with a six weeks' spell of rheumatism."

But for quite the first half of the journey no snow fell, and that was something. It was a time to be thankful for small mercies.

We had reached St. Laurent du Pont about ten o'clock, and by half-past ten were again en route. Turning to the right we immediately entered the gorge leading to the monastery, and for nearly two hours were continually ascending a steep mountain pass.

The pass is one of great interest. In a very few minutes we had left behind us all signs of life and habitation, and were alone with the mountains. To our left hand, at the commencement, the torrent ran over its rocky bed, and soon nothing but the running stream and the road separated the two ranges of mountains. The water, notwithstanding the weather, was of a transparent emerald green of great clearness and beauty; beauty which yet must be considerably heightened

beneath the reflection of a blue sky and shining sun. Great boulders of rock stood out of the water, pieces of stone detached and fallen from the mountains; some of them worn away to an exact resemblance of colossal frogs in the act of leaping. Here and there small streams or cascades ran down the mountains from a great height. Almost from beginning to end we were journeying, as it were, in a dense pine forest, so thickly, up to the very summits, were the sides wooded. To-day, the trees looked sombre and cold and repelling.

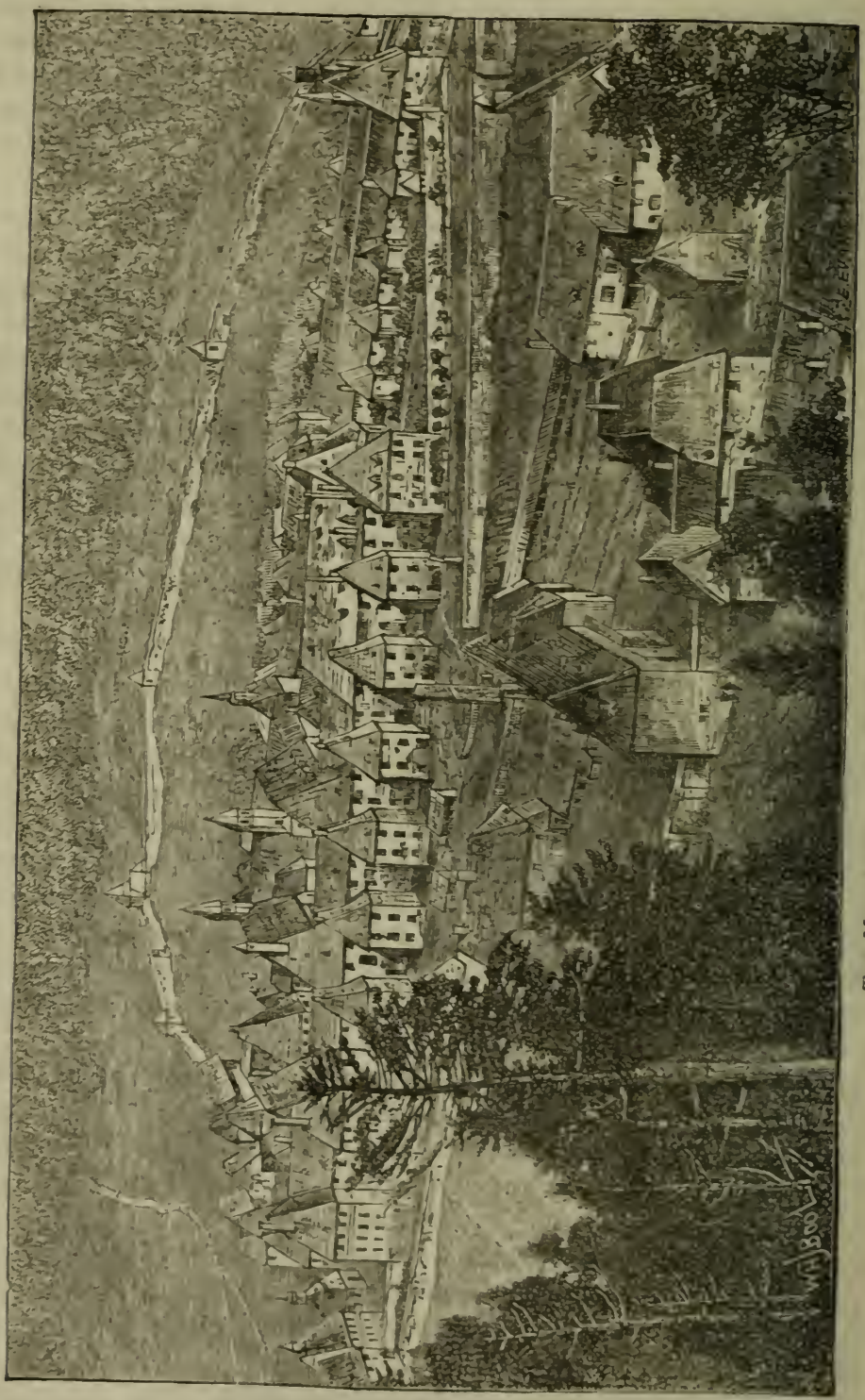
Soon after quitting the village we passed the last sign of habitation: a forge at Fourvoirie, situated most romantically by the torrent-side. The mountains ahead closing; trees and branches overhanging the water, here spanned by an old, rustic, greystone bridge; the forge immediately beside it giving life and colouring to the scene. At a little distance the torrent forms a picturesque fall of some feet, down which the green water pours with a faint roar (faint, at least, when mentally compared with such a fall as that of Gastein); and beyond the fall the ruined bridge of the old road, used by the monks in the early days of their history. For a striking coup-d'œil, for beauty and romance, it was not surpassed. After this, like the monks, we might indeed say that we had bidden the world farewell.

The precipices are of considerable height, the mountains in parts almost perpendicular. The new road is good, but time and labour have not been wasted, and there is no space to spare. You pass beside the limestone rocks, and sometimes beneath their overhanging projections, as in the accompanying illustration (No. 1): and before reaching the monastery four short tunnels have to be entered, hollowed out in the rocks. Until the making of the present road, vehicles could not pass up; and the timber cut in the upper forests was sawn into planks and conveyed down on the backs of the mules. At the old bridge there formerly existed a gateway, between the precipices and an obelisk of limestone called l'œillette; and beyond this point in those early days no female was allowed to penetrate.

Before we were half way up, the snow lay thick upon the ground, and in the latter half of the ascent it began again to fall heavily. Ascending higher and higher, the snow lay deeper, and at half a mile from the convent we were compelled to quit the caléche and take to our legs. I don't know that I ever walked a more difficult half-mile. At every step we sank far into the snow, and it was very easy to realize its effect of inducing sleep. Near the convent the road, happily, had been somewhat cleared, for it lay everywhere pretty well a yard deep upon the ground.

But it was a very grand, almost solemn sight. The pine-trees around covered with their pale drapery; all sign of green lost; nothing but this pure, dazzling white, spreading itself through the branches and ramifications: a network of natural and marvellous beauty. In the

dark night they must have resembled tall ghosts, fitting inhabitants for this lonesome and desolate spot.



THE MONASTERY OF THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE.—III.

At length, a sudden turn; and, perched amidst the pine forests, with rocky mountains in the distance, we perceived, with a rush of joy, the immense pile of the Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse.—C. W. W.

(*Concluded next Month.*)

# ALL SOULS' EVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

*(Reprinted.)*

ONE of the pleasantest spots in that part of France is the little commune of St. Eloi, so named after its church. It lies in the north, not many miles from Calais. One summer's day, years ago, two strange ladies were set down by the morning diligence at its only inn, or auberge, over whose door was written, Ici on loge à pied et à cheval.

The landlady came forward, in a blue petticoat and white bracers; sabots on her feet and a long broom in her hand. "What did mesdames please to require?"

"Nous êtes viens—tell her Clara—pour avoir trouver some apartments," began the elder lady, in a tumult of confusion.

"Mesdames sont Anglaises?" interrupted the woman.

"Oui," hastily answered the elder lady; "that is, Irlandaises—it's all the same—and nous besoin des appartements. Vous comprends? Why don't you explain, Clara, standing there as silent as a post?"

"Dear mamma, if you will allow me a moment to speak." And the young lady explained, in perfect French, that her mother, being in delicate health, required quiet, pure country air, and pure country milk; and that a friend had recommended St. Eloi. Could the landlady tell them of apartments?"

"Never was asked for such a thing before," responded the hostess. But at that moment a very handsome young man, tall and slender, rode up, sprang from his horse, tossed the bridle to the landlady, and spoke.

"I'll leave him here for five minutes, dame. Just put him in the stable as he is: while I go into Duterte's on an errand for my mother."

"Master Francis," cried the landlady, "these good English ladies want apartments. Do you believe there is such a thing to be had?"

The young man raised his hat to the ladies. "Could he have the honour of being of service to them?"

"Tell him, Clara—I can see he is a gentleman—he may be of more use to us than that ill-dressed landlady," cried Mrs. Fitzgerald. And the young lady, blushing, proceeded to do so.

The young man considered. "Truly, I don't know," he said. "I fear—— This spot is so very small and retired, you see, that visitors rarely come to it, consequently no accommodation has ever been provided. Let me see—Madame Coe has a commodious house: what do you think of la mère Coe, dame?" turning to the landlady.

"Well, you have a talent for getting out of difficulties, Master Francis! Mother Coe has done nothing but grumble at the loneliness of her big house, since her daughters married, and at the easy life Babette leads of it. She might like somebody in it for company. Suppose you were to go and see, Master Francis?"

"What a civil, gentlemanly young man!" exclaimed the lady, looking after him as he moved away. "I always took young Frenchmen to be nothing but monkeys. Ask who he is, Clara?"

He was the young gentleman at the château, the landlady answered, François Latange, and owned a good bit of property in the commune—that is, his father did. Monsieur Latange was very old now, turned seventy, and sat in the chimney-corner all day, sucking tablettes.* Madame Latange was not fifty yet; a scolding, never-quiet dame, who ruled despotically the house, and the village, and especially Master Francis. He was the only child, heir to all; but Madame had a niece who lived with her, Mademoiselle Anastasie, a demoiselle of six-and-twenty with a vinegar face and a cherry-coloured coiffure, who looked after the kitchen sharper than Madame did, and scolded the servants twice to her once. Master Francis was betrothed to Mademoiselle Anastasie, and they were to be married when he was twenty-one: that would be in another year. The landlady *hoped* it would be a prosperous ménage: Madame had brought it all about: but some people had a notion that Master Francis was too fond of admiring pretty faces to put up exclusively with the plain one of Mademoiselle Anastasie.

She was interrupted by the return of Master Francis himself. He had seen Madame Coe (except in conversations of ceremony, like the present, that gentlewoman was familiarly styled la mère Coe), and thought matters might be arranged. Would the ladies allow him the honour of escorting them to her house?

Matters were arranged. Madame Coe was not less pleased to have her solitary rooms occupied, and to afford an increase of employment to her lazy maid Babette, than the ladies were to agree to her very reasonable terms. And in a few days they arrived finally with their luggage from Calais, and took up their abode in St. Eloi.

It was quite an event to the village, and everybody fell in love with Clara, who really was a very lovable young lady, with her charming beauty and her modest manners. Mrs. Fitzgerald at times got laughed at, and that was when she insisted on plunging wholesale into French. At first, a few styled them "English heretics," but they proved to be stanch Roman Catholics, with not a taint of heresy about them. Madame Latange did not take quite kindly to them. She hated and despised the English. But she condescendingly in-

* A sweetmeat made of treacle and butter, answering somewhat to the English "bull's-eye," much patronised by French people of all ages.

vited them to spend an occasional day at the château, where Clara had to make friends with Mademoiselle Anastasie. Master Francis and Miss Clara got on very well together. But we are coming to that by-and-by.

## II.

The time arrived for the tirage au sort of that year for the department of the Pas de Calais. Every French male subject, on approaching his twenty-first year, has to draw lots whether he shall be a soldier or not. There is no exception: the prince's son and the beggar's must alike hazard their chance. But when once the drawing is over, the equality ends; for while the poor, if they fall, have no chance but to serve; the rich, should they have been unlucky, provide a substitute.

Heavily rose the morning, and heavily rose the hearts in St. Eloi, on the day fixed for the tirage. Many a mother, sick with anxious suspense, saw her boy depart for Calais, with a wailing prayer to the Virgin that a high number might fall to him. They were mostly peasants' sons who went from St. Eloi; and they started to walk, in their clean blue blouses and greased Sunday shoes; started with heavy steps and still more heavy hearts: but Master Francis Latange, for *his* time had now come, rode forth from his father's house, well mounted, followed by his servant. It may indeed be said that what was as death to them was sport to him. Suppose he did fall? Well, what of that? a substitute was ready. Twenty substitutes had he needed them.

As he came to la mère Coe's house, he looked up at certain of its windows. A young, anxious face was at one of them; and Master Francis leapt off his horse; which Paul, the groom, rode up and held.

"Just a word, Clare, my dearest," he said, as he entered, "to bid me God-speed."

"Now why did you come in, Francis?" she asked, in quite a cold sort of voice, though she was trembling with delight. "It is wrong."

"Bah, Clare! I know now who it was that busied herself to tell you that rubbish about my mother. It came through that interesting cousin of mine, Mademoiselle Anastasie."

"It is of no consequence who it was, Francis. If—if—it is really so" —Clara seemed to hesitate for words—"that Madame Latange forbids your visits here, we cannot continue to receive you."

"We'll talk of that another time: my horse won't stand. Farewell, my love," he whispered, snatching also another sort of farewell. "There, Clare, my own! that's what I came in for."

He was outside almost as he spoke, vaulting on his horse, and the blushing face of Clara peeped again from the window. He detected it, hidden though it nearly was by the curtain, and he smiled and bowed gallantly, riding away bareheaded till he was beyond her view.

"I wouldn't give my old clay pipe for Mam'selle Anastasie's chance

now," cogitated old Paul, shrewdly, as he trotted after his young master. "But I'm not going to split upon him to Madame."

Ah! those anxious hearts, those anxious faces, standing, that after noon, at their cottage doors! The day had turned out wretchedly cold, and pouring with rain. Francis Latange was back early.

"Oh, Master Francis," cried a woman, from the first door he came to, "what about my poor boy? His number ——"

"First-rate, Mother Gris," interrupted the young man cheerily, riding on without stopping. "Ninety-six, I think."

"Thank the good God!" murmured the mother, falling down on her knees on the threshold, and drawing out her beads.

"Master Francis—a moment, sir!" implored an aged man, staggering across the road. "Has my grandson fallen?"

"I cannot tell you, Joseph," answered the young horseman, in a kindly tone; doubly kind, because he knew the news that was in store for the poor old man. "I did not get at all the numbers, you know."

"I feel he is down," moaned the old man, "though you won't tell it me, sir. Who is to work for me, in my years, when Jean shall be gone! His brother does nothing for me."

"Don't meet sorrow half-way, my poor Joseph. You shan't want a crust and a roof, even if Jean has to go."

"The saints protect him for a kind heart!" muttered the aged man, gazing after the horseman. "But—oh, Mother of Mercy, help me and my poor boy! I know he is fallen."

Mrs. Fitzgerald saw Master Francis coming, and threw her window up. "What speed?" she called out, as Clara glided to her side.

"Tombé," replied the young man, partly checking his horse; "my number was seventeen. So I can go for a soldier, now, as soon as I please." And Clara's very lips turned white as he cantered on.

The next morning, as Clara was making the breakfast, Madame Coe came in. "I have news to tell you, Miss Clare," she began, "and I'll tell it before Madame your mamma comes down—I know I did not want my mother to ferret into my private affairs when I was a demoiselle. There was a great dispute up at the château last night."

"A dispute!" repeated Clara.

"Between Master Francis and his mother. Mam'selle Adèle, who was up there yesterday doing some dressmaking, told me. It seems they were talking about the substitute for Master Francis, and that brought up other matters. Madame began to speak of his marriage, and Master Francis stopped her, quite carelessly like, and said he did not intend to carry out the marriage, for he thought he and Mam'selle Anastasie would not suit each other."

Clara changed colour.

"And the joke of it was, that Mam'selle Anastasie had got her ear to the partition, along with Mam'selle Adèle, and heard it," continued the

Mother Coe, in perfect glee. "Then Madame set-to, and wrangled with him; and Master Francis brought out that he liked somebody else better —and of course, my dear, *we* know who that is. Upon which Madame's rage ran sky high, and she gave him a flat box on both his ears. He is to serve his seven years. Madame will not buy him a substitute. In her passion she swore it."

"But his father?" Clara shivered, much shocked and bewildered.

"His father! My dear, you might as well speak of a block of wood. Whatever Madame decrees, is law. She tamed the spirit out of her old husband years ago."

"But the property is his—the estate, the money; it is not hers."

"Just as much his as it is mine, for any manner of use," persisted Dame Coe. "He dare not ask for a sou, that old man, and he never has one. He might as well ask Madame for her head as for money to buy his son off, unless she chose to give it. No, Miss Clara. Femme Latange has not sworn to many things in her life, but she has to this. Poor Master Francis must serve."

Mademoiselle Adèle's report was substantially correct. Master Francis had declined to marry Mam'selle Anastasie, and when his mother defiantly urged the contract, he said the contract might go and be hanged—to speak politely. So then she boxed his ears. Upon which, Master Francis, his cheeks tingling with pain, and himself with anger, boldly avowed there was only one woman in the world should call him husband, and that was Clara Fitzgerald. Madame jigged about the room with rage, and finally fell on her knees and *swore* that he should serve his seven years as a soldier; she would find him no substitute. At the end of that period he would come back glad enough to take to himself his deserving cousin Anastasie.

Oh, he would serve, Francis replied with bravado, and glad to do so; anything to get away from home tyranny. But he thought Mademoiselle Anastasie need not trouble herself to wait for him.

Everybody said that before the time came for the calling out of the new recruits, Madame would grow cool and reasonable: she never would permit her fine son, of whom she was so proud, to serve as a soldier. It is probable that these were precisely Madame's own intentions. But one early day, long before Madame or St. Eloi expected it, an order descended on the village like a clap of thunder. The new recruits were to join forthwith: *for war had broken out with Russia.*

War! Francis Latange to go forth and be shot at! Madame came to her senses at once: and she ordered the horses to the lumbering, window-rattling old family coach, that she might jog off to Calais to see about the substitute.

"Spare yourself the trouble, mother," said Francis. "I shall serve my time."

"We are at war," shrieked Madame. "You'll get killed."

"I daresay I shall. And not be sorry, either. Anything for a quiet life. You might have purchased a substitute *before* the war broke out, but none shall say that Francis Latange shirked his duty now."

"The grief will kill me," wailed Madame.

"Oh no, it won't," returned Francis. "You and Mam'selle Anastasie will just go on as much alive as ever, looking after the eggs, and blowing up the servants."

Madame melted into tears. "Francis, you are ungrateful. Won't you reflect that you are very dear to me: the day-star of my life, the apple of my eye?"

"Well, mother, you have taken the wrong way to show it; treating me as a child, and magging the peace out of me."

"I *will* get you a substitute, my son," she passionately broke forth. "Or, if you must go to the war, you shall have your commission."

"Listen, mother," he answered. "You have suffered my name to stand enrolled, these many weeks, as one of the ranks, and as such I will serve. Do you fear I am a coward? Would I like the reproach, of being one, cast at me?"

The village all turned out to see the recruits depart; there was not a dry eye in it. Francis Latange went with the rest, and his mother flung herself down on her knees in the mud of the road, to pray the Virgin for his safe return. Mam'selle Anastasie was behind her, also on her knees, telling her beads. This was nothing extraordinary for that moment of painful emotion at St. Eloi.

Francis had stolen a meeting with Clara Fitzgerald the evening before. He had not seen much of her lately; for Clara had refused to meet him in opposition to his mother. But now that he was going away, perhaps for ever, she was as anxious as he for a parting interview. She had learnt to love him deeply, passionately; and when the last moment of farewell came, her anguish rose in convulsive sobs.

"Do not grieve so, Clara," he whispered, fondly laying her head upon his shoulder. "I may be back sooner than you think. If the war should abruptly end, as many prophesy it will, they may then send a substitute for me, and I will come home. But rest assured of one thing, Clara: that when I do come, be it sooner or later, it shall be to win you for my wife. God protect you, my love, for ever and for ever."

But the war did not come to an end, and the months dragged themselves slowly on. A letter now and then found its way from Francis to his father, and to Clara Fitzgerald. These letters gave the leading incidents in the progress of the allied armies, the landing in the Crimea, the battle of the Alma, and the long and terrible siege of Sebastopol. The summer of 1855 came round, and the troops were still *before* Sebastopol, not in it.

It would really seem, at least it did to the village, that Mrs. Fitzgerald was going to be a fixture at St. Eloi. But Mrs. Fitzgerald was not rich, and she was unwilling to quit a locality where she saved no inconsiderable portion of her income. With the exception of a week or two's absence occasionally, she had now been two years at St. Eloi.

July came in; and with it the news of the disastrous battle of the 17th and 18th of June before Sebastopol, when the allied armies were repulsed in their attempt to take the Malakhof and the Redan. It was rumoured that the loss of the French was frightful, and St. Eloi trembled for the safety of its children. But they had to wait many days yet for the details and the names of the fallen.

The official returns came at last, and Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, who in his own august person did duty for the maire, préfet, and the rest of the authorities in a larger town, stood in his bureau, ready to read over the list of the slain. The poor villagers were crowding in: those who had relatives at the war in dread fear, those who had not, from sympathy and curiosity. The Commissaire was opening his mouth to begin, when a movement amongst his audience took place; they were pushing each other back, treading on toes, and humbly squeezing themselves into nothing, to make way for a feeble old gentleman who was entering. It was Monsieur Latange. He had actually come out of his chimney-corner, and walked down from his château. Monsieur le Commissaire stepped forth, bowing, from behind his desk, and installed his guest in his own office-chair.

"Attention!" shouted the Commissaire. And he proceeded to read out the list in his most official voice.

"'For the commune of St. Eloi. Return of those killed in the engagement of the 18th of June, before Sebastopol:

"'Jean-Marie Dubuis.

"'Robert Eloi Hans.

"'Paul Vanderwelde.

"'François Latange.'

C'est tout, mes amis, grâce à Dieu!" concluded the Commissaire, taking off his spectacles.

There was a moment of dead silence, and then a burst of sobs and smothered cries arose from the listeners, in the midst of which the poor old Proprietor fell heavily from his chair. They picked him up, and M. le Commissaire went to the pump, in the yard behind his bureau, and fetched some water. It restored him: but the hope of his old age was gone. Père Latange had truly loved his son.

Madame Latange was a changed woman from that day. It was not only her happiness, but the *pride* of her existence, that had left her with her son's life. She never knew until now how entirely her hopes had been concentrated in that son's future. Madame spent a little fortune in masses for his soul—for which the priests prayed their best. And

she ordered a handsome tombstone to be placed in the cemetery to his memory. Mademoiselle Anastasie consoled herself by accepting the addresses of a neighbouring farmer: who, having become possessed of the notion that she would now be the inheritor, had hastened to offer them.

But the grief of Clara Fitzgerald! None saw its outward signs, save in her now invariably languid manner and pallid cheek. Babette set that down to her mother's illness. For Mrs. Fitzgerald had been seized with rheumatic fever; and lay a martyr to suffering and fractiousness. And the weeks flew on again.

## III.

Boom! boom! boom! The heavy bell of St. Eloi's church, never heard but on state occasions, or when a fire happened in the commune, suddenly tolled out at evening twilight. Boom! boom! boom!

Clara started in nervousness from the chair she occupied in Babette's kitchen. Anxiety on her mother's account, combined with her own secret sorrow, was beginning to tell on her nerves and health.

"Babette! hark there! It must be a fire."

"Sit yourself down again, Miss Clare, and look to your saucepan," responded Babette. "You are forgetting the fête of to-morrow: All Saints' Day. The bell's thundering out for that."

Clara resumed her place on the wooden chair by the stove, and went on stirring the arrowroot in the saucepan. Mrs. Fitzgerald, more peevish than ever, now she was recovering, fancied none of these messes, unless they were prepared by her daughter. So Clara made frequent visits to Babette's kitchen, to the complete satisfaction of that valuable domestic, who invariably treated her to a dish of gossip.

"My faith! isn't la patronne going to be smart to-morrow!" she began, in a half whisper, jerking her head in the direction of Madame Coe's salle-à-manger, where that lady was snugly ensconced, her feet and her petticoats over an open charcoal chauffrette. "She has been having her purple velvet bonnet done up with green ribbons and grapes, and she has got a new cloth mantle; one of them round grey things just come up. What are you going to wear new to-morrow, Miss Clare?"

"I?" answered Clara, languidly. "Nothing."

"Nothing!" retorted Babette. "But you are going to church?"

"Of course," answered the young lady.

"And as if folks went there in old clothes to-morrow! I wouldn't show my face at church on All Saints' Day in a cap I had worn before, if I knew I should get a sweetheart by it. You have not been here on the First of November, Miss Clare?"

"No, we have been in England both years. Mamma receives her rents then. I have never been in France on the day of All Saints."

"Then, it's kept in this village, I can tell you, Mademoiselle! The grand bell, that's stunning us now, begins at five in the morning, and never leaves off all day. And the church is kept open till ten at night. You should see the candles that are burnt in it after dark. Hundreds of them."

"Why, yes!" interrupted Clara, in sudden recollection; "to-morrow night is the Eve of All Souls! The night when we pray for the dead!"

"And wherever were your wits, Mademoiselle, that you have only just thought of that?" asked Babette, with that familiarity of manner characteristic of French servants: who, however, with all their freedom of speech, do not lose sight of respect.

"Is it the custom here to kneel in the cemetery and pray on the Day of the Dead?" questioned Clara.

"I should think it is the custom everywhere," answered Babette, indignation in her tone at the superfluous question. "Dry or wet, we all go, if we have any dead to pray for; and those who've not go for company. That arrowroot's thickening, Miss Clare."

"Do you go, Babette?"

"What should hinder me?" asked Babette. "And la patronne," with another jerk of the head towards the salle-à-manger, "gives me two hours to-morrow afternoon for church. But there's one thing I would not do, Mademoiselle; and that is, go out to pray to-morrow night."

"Why not?" asked Clara.

"Catch me stirring abroad after dark on All Souls' Eve! Why, you know, Miss Clare, that the spirits come out of purgatory then, and appear to you."

"Superstitious people say so, Babette. But it is not true."

"Oh, well—if you know better than those who have seen them. *I have seen them,*" concluded Babette, resolutely.

"You may have fancied so."

"I saw my sister's husband. She, hard-hearted creature! had got married again, so, of course, it was no use its appearing to *her*. I was scuttering along in the dark to the church—it's six years ago this same blessed November—and there I beheld something without form, a fluttering of wings like, just before me, high in the air. I knew it was my poor brother-in-law's soul, released for that night out of purgatory, and I fell flat down on my face in a pool of water, and never dared to get up again till some passers-by led me home. You may well fancy, Mademoiselle, that I have not put myself outside the door since on All Souls' Eve. But oh, my heart, Miss Clare! have you heard what Madame Latange is going to do?"

"No," answered Clara, rousing up at the name.

"Master Francis's tombstone is completed, and in the cemetery. The most superb slab, they say: a white urn, and a willow on black

marble that you may see your face in, and gold letters for the inscription. It must have cost money, though, that tablet."

The spoon had dropped into the arrowroot, and lay there. Babette's voice fell to a still lower key.

"She is going to church to-morrow night at seven, and when the candles are burnt out—she's to have some dozens, they say, all alight together—she goes off straight to the cemetery, to pray over this new stone. She *is*, Miss Clare."

"But it is not the custom to pray in the cemetery to-morrow night," debated the young lady, forgetting the spoon and the arrowroot.

"Never was yet," responded Babette. "But Madame lays his death at her own door, and she thinks to expiate some of his time in purgatory, poor young gentleman, by praying-in the Day of the Dead. She'll kneel in the cemetery until the clocks have told midnight."

"All alone?" shivered Clara.

"Not she. Plenty of commères will go with her for the novelty of the thing. I wouldn't be one: and risk seeing his spirit—which is certain to appear. Do you notice how thin she's got?"

Clara replied by a faint moan. Her face was hidden in her hands.

"She's like a shadow, compared to what she was when Master Francis was at home; and as to her dead-and-alive old husband—— There's your arrowroot all gone, Miss Clare!" screamed out Babette, by way of conclusion. "And now you must begin some more! I'll put on a handful of braises and get up the fire."

All Saints' Day is the greatest religious fête, except Easter, in the Catholic calendar. The church decorations, the music, the rich robes of the priests, and the brilliancy of the ladies' toilets, are perfect on the fête of Toussaint. A strange contrast does the following day present, All Souls'; or, as the French emphatically express it, the Jour des Morts. There are no gaudy colours in dress then; no decorations. The world attires itself in sombre black; the glittering tints in the priests' robes are replaced by black and white; the church is hung with black, and nothing meets the eye, inside it, but deaths' heads, and cross-bones, and skulls elevated on poles; whilst in the bowed, craped heads of the hushed congregation you behold real mourners. People in the large towns do not go to the cemetery, to kneel on the damp earth and pray, quite so universally as they used; but in the small rural communes, such as St. Eloi, none omit it. The superstition, that the souls of the deceased come out of purgatory after dark on All Souls' Eve and hover in the air, waiting to appear to any of their relatives who may venture abroad, is most religiously believed by the lower orders; and by a good many of their betters also. The supposed object of their appearing is to remind these their relatives to pray for them on the Jour des Morts: and with the first glimmer of that sombre day's dawn, the poor spirits wing their flight back to purgatory.

## IV.

All Saints' Day at last! and a very fine one. It was to be an eventful day, take it for all in all. Breakfast over, Clara left her mother to the care of the French nurse and prepared to go out.

"Have you seen her, Miss Clare?" whispered Babette, as she traversed the passage to open the house-door for the young lady.

"Seen whom?"

"La patronne," answered Babette, with one of her favourite side-nods towards the staircase. "She'll be down by-and-by, as fine as an empress, in her brown satin gown; and she's putting white net sleeves over her old wrists, and there's a pair of straw-coloured gloves lying on the commode by her bonnet and new cloak. Won't some cats have tails!"

"Open the door, Babette. I shall be late at mass."

"Not so late as she'll be. When she comes out en grande tenue, she's always an hour at her toilet. But for the love of all the saints, Mademoiselle," continued the unceremonious Babette, running her eyes over Clara, "why did you keep on your old mourning to-day? And all the commune so elegant!—and you with those lovely dresses in your garde-robe! I'm sure that uncle of Madame your mamma's has had the mourning worn for him these six months. It's getting to look quite rusty."

"Oh, what matters it—black or white?" uttered Clara, the grieved feeling in her heart finding vent, as the woman spoke about *mourning*. "Don't keep me here, Babette. I want to go."

Babette moved her back from against the door; and Clara, passing out, found herself face to face with Madame Latange, with whom she had held no intercourse since the departure of Francis. She would willingly have shrunk away now, but Babette had shut the door.

"Don't look so scared, young lady," said the latter, in a kind tone, to Clara's very great astonishment. "I am not going to reproach you. *He* is gone; and, to indulge ill-feeling will not bring him back again. Perhaps I might have liked you better, but you see I had set my mind on his marrying Anastasie. She was just the wife for him, for she would have kept the château together, and things in the kitchen from going to rack and ruin, and checked Francis in his generous fits."

Madame paused, but Clara did not answer.

"She has been ungrateful, has Anastasie. Actually gone and promised to marry a man who is at mortal enmity with me—Farmer Brun. He won a lawsuit from me last year. Since then, my dear, it has crossed my mind that you might have made him as good a wife as she; so let us be friends. We'll go to mass together."

Clara went. Walking into church side by side with Madame, to the wondering astonishment of all the gazers in it.

"Mother," said Clara, as she sat by her mother's bedside that evening, when the shades of night were gathering, "you have no objection to my accompanying Madame Latange to pray to-night?"

"Madame Latange!"

"I told you, dear mother, I met her this morning, and how pleasant she was. She is coming to see you, when to-morrow is over."

"What good's Madame Latange to do me?" querulously interrupted Mrs. Fitzgerald. "I don't like her. Breaking off her acquaintance with us, as she did, without reason!"

"She goes to-night to pray for her son; in the church and at his tombstone. May I make one of those who join her?"

"What, in the cemetery? Nonsense. You'll catch your death."

"Oh no, I shall be well wrapped up. We knew poor Francis"—Clara's voice trembled. "Let me make one to pray for the repose of his soul."

"I don't see why its repose need trouble you," returned Mrs. Fitzgerald. "Quite the contrary. I had used to think he was inclined to flirt with you, and that you encouraged him. There's nothing so unladylike for a young girl as flirting, Clara."

"Well, mamma, you will not have that to complain of again," sighed Clara. "I may go with Madame?"

"Now, I don't want to be teased. My arms are in excruciating pain, and it's nothing to me whether you go or not. But if you catch rheumatic fever in the cemetery, there'll be nobody to nurse you, recollect."

A goodly company of commères, as Babette had expressed it, went forth that night with Madame Latange. The great bell boomed out incessantly: the church was crowded with devout groups, bowed in silence before their many candles, the grease from which guttered down on the stone floor; and the priests, for the last time that long day, sang over their monotonous chants. A little before nine, the last candle offered up by Madame Latange had expired.

The cemetery lay beyond the village. It was a dreary walk to it at all times, between the two straight rows of poplars. The stout hearts of some of the commères failed; and they turned home on leaving the church. Mademoiselle Anastasie, who was a very coward, had been brought by her aunt against her will.

"For the love of Heaven, don't go, my aunt," she implored, with chattering teeth; "wait till daylight. The shades will have returned to purgatory then, and we can all join you, and pray in peace. Should *he* appear to us, I should just die of fright."

Madame Latange's only answer was the taking of Mam'selle Anastasie by the arm, and marching her off towards the cemetery. Her serving man, Paul, walked first with a blazing torch, and the group of courageous commères huddled close behind, holding on to one another.

"But is Madame herself not afraid to behold the spirit of poor Master

Francis?" ventured Paul, who by no means admired the position assigned him in the march.

"My eyes have ached to see him so long that they would rejoice in the sight," replied his mistress, with valiance.

"Igh!—igh!—igh!" burst out Mam'selle Anastasie, in a succession of shrill screams. "What's that looking over the hedge?"

Considerable confusion ensued. Cries of horror. Everybody laying hold of everybody else's clothes.

"I tell you what it is, ladies," said the unfortunate torchbearer, standing stock still, "if you are to frighten one like this, I can't go on in advance. Madame must forgive me when I say I'd rather lose my place first."

"Courage," commanded Madame Latange. "If you all walk linked, and bend your eyes on the ground, there'll be no danger of seeing anything. As for Mademoiselle Anastasie, should she frighten us again, I shall leave her in the hedge by herself till we come back."

The threat imposed silence on Mademoiselle Anastasie, and the procession resumed its march. It came to the gate of the cemetery, and bore on through its cold grass to the corner, where stood the tablet to the memory of Francis Latange.

It was a handsome erection of black marble: a white urn and drooping willow carved on it.

François Latange,
Fils unique de Pierre Latange et de Françoise de Brie.
Tué devant Sébastopol le 18 de Juin, 1855, agé de 22 ans.
Priez pour lui.

They sank on their knees around the stone, and the sobs of the *mother* broke forth aloud. Clara Fitzgerald's head was pressed on the cold marble, her grief was silent; but many wept in concert with Madame. And so they knelt, and sobbed, and prayed, their faces hidden: a strange group to look on, in that dark night, in that lonely graveyard!

Paul's torch was coming to an end. Rising, he proceeded to light another. This little diversion caused la mère Coe to look up. Being middle-aged and stout, she was getting tired of her kneeling position. The cramp was coming into her legs.

A hideous shriek! an unearthly howl! and Madame Coe, from whom they proceeded, flung her arms round the legs of the startled Paul, and buried her face against them, and howled interminably. Whatever had taken la mère Coe?

"There he is! his own spectre!" she burst forth, her voice shrill with terror. "I knew it would appear."

Paul raised his torch; the unhappy devotees looked as high in the air as its light would allow. Standing close by his own tombstone, his head bending forward as if to read its inscription, was the spectre of Francis Latange. Thin, worn, his cheeks pale, his eyes sunk, there it

was, with only one arm, and in a faded old suit of regimentals. No doubt the clothes he had died in.

What had been the screams of the Mother Coe to those which now ensued? Not a saint in the calendar but was invoked with every variety of terrified aspiration; and the wretched group started to their feet and rushed away, pell-mell, out of the haunted cemetery. Paul, dropping his torch, and ungallantly shaking off the ladies, flew off in front; the ghost went after them; some choking, some praying, and the rest yelling. The noise penetrated nearly all the way to St. Eloi.

Clara Fitzgerald did not fly with the rest. In rising, her foot caught in a tuft of grass, and she was thrown heavily down again. Her companions were then at a distance, and she remained, clasping the marble stone, overcome with faintness and extremity of terror. The ghost came striding back again, in very unghostly fashion. It took up the flickering torch, and held it to her face.

"Clare," it gently said—and, with the words, Clara began to suspect it was no ghost, but real flesh and blood—"do I frighten *you?*"

But she was too terrified still to answer: and her teeth chattered, and her frame shook.

"I have still one arm left," he said, digging the torch in the earth, so that it still gave its light, and passing his arm round Clara. "Those terrified women must have taken me for my own spectre, for I see you have my death recorded here. Some mistake in the returns."

"But is it really you?" she said, bursting into tears. "We thought you were dead."

"So I was nearly, Clare. They took me up for dead last June, in the storming of the Malakhof. I have come home to recruit my strength, come home for good: a one-armed man is useless as a soldier. Perhaps you too will reject me now."

Her tears flowed on. Delicious tears!

"Oh, Clare," he whispered, as he held her to him, "though I have only one arm left, it shall be found powerful to protect you through life—my cherished wife. I said I would come home to you, my darling. None knew the fervent prayer I offered up for it, save God. He heard and blessed it."

"But did you drop from the clouds?" demanded Madame Latange, in the midst of her tears, when Francis got home.

"No, mother, I dropped from the diligence. We were invalided home, *viâ* Marseilles, and I reached Calais to-day. There I got a banquette place in the six o'clock diligence. The first face I saw here was Père Duterte's; when he recovered from his wonder, he volunteered the information that a company had just started to pray for me in the cemetery. So I thought I'd go after it, and send Duterte up here first to break the news to my father. How you all screamed!"

"But you are so piteously thin and ill, Francis! And your one arm! It is dreadful."

"Never mind, mother. I shall get strong again. And for my lost arm—it might have been worse."

"François, mon cher," uttered the old man, with imploring eyes, "you will not go away again?"

"Never, father. I have sown my wild oats, and have come home to settle. If my mother will allow me."

"Yes, I will, my son," she replied, with a pointed meaning in her tone. "Mademoiselle Anastasie's going to settle herself also, Francis. With the Farmer Brun."

"It is not fixed; there's nothing decided; I'm not obliged to have him, now my cousin is come home," eagerly interrupted Mademoiselle Anastasie. "And I think the Farmer Brun an old bear."

"You should have discovered that before," said Madame Latange.

"*She* will make you a dutiful daughter, mother dear," whispered Francis, "though she is an English girl. Will you not try her?"

"I suppose I shall have to do so, my son. You may go to-morrow, with my love, and fetch her to dinner."

"A nice wife she'll make!" called out Mam'selle Anastasie, red with spite. "She'll never look after the eggs. They'll be half lost—you'll see! And I know she could not make an omelette if she tried."

"I'll teach her," said Madame.

"Grâce à Dieu!" cried old Père Latange.

## THE DEACON'S POTATOES.

An old lady sat in her old arm-chair,
With wrinkled face and dishevell'd hair,
And pale and hunger-worn features
For days and for weeks her only fare,
As she sat there in her old arm-chair,
Had been nothing but potatoes.

And now they were gone: of bad or good
Not one was left for the old lady's food,
Of these her stock of potatoes;
And she sigh'd and said, "What shall I do?
Where shall I send, and to whom shall I go
To get some more potatoes?"

And she thought of the deacon over the way,
The deacon so ready to worship and pray,
Whose cellar was full of potatoes;
And she said, "I will send for the deacon to come,
He'll not mind much to give me some
Of such a store of potatoes."

And the deacon came over as fast as he could,
Thinking to do the old lady some good,
But never thought once of potatoes ;
He ask'd her directly to tell her *chief* want,
And she, simple soul, expecting a grant,
Immediately answer'd, " Potatoes."

But the deacon's religion went not that way,
He was more accustom'd to preach and to pray,
Than to give of his hoarded potatoes ;
So, not hearing, of course, what the old lady said,
He rose to pray with uncover'd head ;
But *she* only thought of potatoes.

He pray'd for patience, for wisdom and grace,
But when he pray'd, " O Lord give her peace,"
She audibly sigh'd " Give potatoes ; "
And at the end of each prayer that he said,
He heard, or he thought that he heard, in its stead,
The same request for potatoes.

The deacon was troubled—knew not what to do ;
'Twas embarrassing, very, to have her act so
About " those carnal potatoes ! "
So ending his prayer, he started for home ;
As the door closed behind him, he heard a deep groan,
" Oh, give to the hungry, potatoes! "

And that groan followed him all the way home ;
In the midst of the night it haunted his room,
" Oh, give to the hungry, potatoes ! "
He could bear it no longer—arose and dress'd,
From his well-fill'd cellar taking in haste
A bag of his best potatoes.

Again he went to the widow's lone hut,
Her sleepless eyes she had not yet shut,
But there she sat in her old arm-chair,
With the same wan features, the same sad air ;
So, entering in, he poured on the floor
A bushel or more from his goodly store
Of the very best potatoes.
" Now," said the deacon, " shall we pray ? "
" Yes," said the widow, " *now* you may ; "
And he kneel'd him down on the sanded floor,
Where he had poured his goodly store—
The widow's heart leap'd up for joy,
Her face was haggard and wan no more.
And such a prayer the deacon pray'd
As never before his lips essay'd :
No longer embarrass'd, but free and full,
He pour'd out the voice of a liberal soul,
And the widow responded aloud, " Amen ! "
But said no more of potatoes.

And would you, who hear this simple tale,
Pray for the poor, and praying, " prevail,"
Then preface your prayers with alms and good deeds ;
Search out the poor, with their cares and their needs ;
Pray for peace, and grace, and heavenly food,
For wisdom and guidance ; for these are all good
But don't forget the *potatoes*.

## AFTER YEARS OF WAITING.

"I SHALL see you to-night, Mrs. Kathlane?"

"At the Grangers! Yes, I shall be there. I hope it won't be a crush."

"Why? I rather like a crush."

"Oh. A crush makes me feel vicious."

Rupert Thornbury smiled as he looked down at the speaker. Something had evidently put her out. "Are you often viciously disposed, Mrs. Kathlane? It is news to me."

"I wish you would not call me that, Rupert. Mrs. Kathlane! You do it on purpose, and I don't like it."

The last words were spoken like a petulant child; and there was a cloud on the face which looked up for a moment from the soft vividly coloured wools which the white and slender fingers were knitting into some incomprehensible "fancy-work." A very beautiful face it was, and a very beautiful woman was little Mrs. Kathlane; and no one in the wide world was more thoroughly convinced of that fact than Rupert Thornbury.

She was slight and small in figure—girlish looking still, despite her four and twenty years. No other woman would have dared, with her complexion, to wear the colours which she did; often in defiance of ordinary rules. She wore, this morning, a deep, royal purple dress, with purple bands in her dark hair, and looked, as no other woman could have looked—charming. Her hair drooped over her forehead in lustrous waves, and was fastened behind with a high, golden comb. Her face was almost marvellous in its perfect form and brilliant colouring; and her great dark eyes, with their long lashes, were enough of themselves to turn an ordinary man's head.

"I don't like it," she said again, glancing at her companion, who was abstractedly tangling the bright wools apparently lost in thought, "and I shall be seriously angry with you if you persist in being so formal. For it is formal, after you have known me since I was a little child, to speak as though we were strangers."

"I'll not call you so again, Millicent. Only——" Mr. Thornbury paused.

"Only what?" returned the imperious little lady, giving him another searching glance.

"Things have changed a great deal since you were a child, Millicent. You are a woman now, wealthy, courted, flattered; and I—but it is no good talking of these things. I must be going. Will you promise me the first waltz to-night?"

"Certainly. I hope you appreciate my kindness. I waltz very rarely, you know."

"I do appreciate it: and now I must go down to that 'stupid old office,' as you call it, and make up for lost time. Good-morning, Millicent—don't forget your promise," and then he was gone. Gone, and unconscious, as he walked swiftly down the street, that Millicent Kathlane's dark eyes were looking after him, and that when she turned back to her work, a soft sigh fluttered from her beautiful lips, and a shadow clouded her face.

He had known her, as she said, since she was a little child; and he, a strong, rude lad, had loved the flower-faced little Millicent dearly; and when, at the age of eighteen, he had been sent away from his home to qualify himself to play a part in the work of life, it was with a secret determination to return after years had passed, and claim her. Although she was a child not a dozen years old, she had taken the warmest place in his warm heart for her own.

Years passed by, and Rupert Thornbury worked hard and well, but the fortune he so ardently wished for never came. He was an honourable man; and crushing his own heart back, he took his father's burdens on his strong, young shoulders, and bore them bravely. Only once he faltered, and that was when, after scarcely six years had passed since he first went out into the world, news came to him that Millicent, his "little Milly," was married. It was her father's wish, the gossips said. Mr. Kathlane, the suitor, was immensely wealthy, and having been fascinated by Millicent's beauty, her parents had used all their influence with her; and the end was, she married. Millicent, now Mrs. Kathlane, went away to her husband's home; and Rupert Thornbury wearily went on with his dull, distasteful labour, with not even the old boyish dream to lighten his task.

Six years more passed slowly by, making many changes in the affairs of both. Mr. Kathlane died suddenly after two or three years of married life, and Millicent went abroad with some friends.

She had been back nearly a year now, and had settled down to a town life. During this period the old childish friendship for Rupert Thornbury had been warmly renewed; and Rupert had discovered that, charming as she was in her childhood and girlhood, now that she was a woman she was infinitely more so.

During this year, life had grown a great deal brighter to Mr. Thornbury; he was prospering, slowly and steadily, and had gained many friends. Anxious mammas looked upon him with favour, and many bright eyes gave him bewitching glances; hitherto in vain. His whole heart—and he knew it—was still with Millicent Kathlane: but her marriage had raised her, both as to wealth and position, so far above himself, that he did not, except at some fond, delusive moment, dare to

aspire to her. He was only a city man, plodding on in his close city office with his three or four clerks under him.

"How beautiful she is!" he thought, as he walked away from the house. "Just the same little Milly at heart, too, as in the dear old days. And her glances—oh, if I might dare to believe in them!—seem as true to me as they were then. But what would the world say?"

That night saw him at Mrs. Granger's: a fashionable woman, with some fashionable daughters, one of whom, Cornelia, had made a dead set at Mr. Thornbury. He stood in the lighted rooms, watching eagerly for Millicent: but it was not until very late that she arrived. As she came down the long rooms—moving as easily and gracefully as though she had been, from earliest childhood, accustomed to reign in society—a murmur of admiration followed her.

She was dressed in a trailing robe of pale, silvery blue, with an over-dress of soft, white lace; her beautiful neck and arms were bare, save for their ornaments of fretted gold; her face was untouched by paint or powder, and her vivid colouring made her beauty seem almost unearthly as compared with some of the inane faces around her. Her black hair, elaborately dressed, was fastened here and there with drooping sprays of scarlet flowers, and at her bosom, looping her over-dress, and in her jewelled *bouquetière*, the scarlet buds glowed and burned.

"Is she not lovely?" That was a question which every one felt could be answered but in the affirmative. And many an envious heart was hidden under the smiling faces which greeted her.

"There is Mrs. Kathlane, Mr. Thornbury," said Cornelia Granger, a tall, pale, ill-natured girl, to whom Rupert had been saying civil nothings for the last few minutes, and who was furiously jealous of Mrs. Kathlane in her heart of hearts. "You gentlemen are wild about her, I believe. Red and blue—what excruciating taste! I wonder her maid does not teach her better."

"Every one has not your critical eyes, Miss Granger," said Rupert, laughing. "I thought her dress charming."

"Of course." Miss Cornelia was not an amiable girl, as we have said, and at that moment her temper was pinching her rather sourly. "Perhaps you make one of those who are wild over her, Mr. Thornbury?"

"It would be of no use to me, I expect, if I were," replied Rupert, in his candour.

"Well, I suppose not—as she is so soon to be married again."

"Married again!" he uttered.

"So report runs," said Miss Granger, toying with her fan.

"To whom? I had not heard of it."

"To Mr. Worthington: a cousin of her late husband, you know."

"I know him," cried Rupert, feeling he knew not how. "Dick Worthington's not worthy of *her*. It would be desecration."

"She may not think so. It is said there was a great deal of intimacy before Mr. Kathlane died. She married him simply for his money—that's well known—and the handsome cousin used to be a very frequent visitor. There was a deal of gossip about it at the time, and—but there's Dick Worthington now. Look how her colour rises when she speaks to him."

"Are you quite certain your information is correct, Miss Granger?"

The pale eyes glanced at him again, and then looked away.

"About the engagement? Quite sure, Mr. Thornbury. At least, the world is sure of it. I am neither more nor less wise than it."

Mr. Thornbury did not change colour at the news, or seem, in reality, to feel much surprise; he stood laughing and chatting with the young lady for a few moments on different subjects, and then, excusing himself, sauntered across the room to where Mrs. Kathlane sat, surrounded by an admiring group, of whom Richard Worthington was one.

"It is my waltz," said Mr. Thornbury, as she looked up, and greeted him with one of her brightest smiles. "Or are you too tired?"

"Tired?" She laughed a little silvery laugh as she rose. "I am never tired of dancing. Richard, I will leave my flowers and fan with you as a hostage."

It was nothing, this leaving with him her fan and flowers—it was like a thousand other little coquettish ways which she had—but Rupert thinking—oh! so bitterly—of what had just been told him, fancied that he saw something deeper than her usual light coquetry in the glance she gave the handsome young fellow, and groaned in spirit. It seemed a full confirmation of what he had heard.

"One, two, three. One, two, three. You are shockingly out of step, Rupert!" said she, after the first turn. "What is the matter? You look as stern as if you had seen a ghost."

"I have," he said, almost grimly—"the ghost of a dead hope;" and she, half-frightened at his tone, looked up at him questioningly. But in another moment he smiled back at her, and she was reassured.

"Don't talk nonsense, Rupert. There! you are dancing beautifully now. What were you and that odious Cornelia Granger talking about so long?"

"Odious do you call her?"

"Well, I do, Rupert. I think her so; she has not a spark of good feeling in her. Don't you go and tell, now."

"Do you think she is truthful, Millicent?"

"No, I don't. Take care!"

They whirled lightly through the dance, Rupert almost startling Millicent by his unwonted gaiety, laughing and chatting like anyone but his grave self; and she, the colour deepening in her cheeks, the

light in her eyes growing momentarily brighter, looked like a veritable "dance-sprite," so airily did she float through the rooms.

"How beautifully they waltz!" Even Cornelia Granger involuntarily spoke in admiration, and a slender youth near her gave it as his opinion that "Thistledown couldn't be lighter than Mrs. Kathlane in a waltz."

"Are you tired?" said Rupert, looking down at the beautiful face; and Millicent, for answer, said she could keep on for ever. And so they danced on and on, until Rupert saw the bright colour fading away, and the sensitive mouth beginning to droop a little at the corners.

"You *are* tired," he said, and then, before she could answer, he whirled her through the low, open window, into the cool, fresh air on the balcony.

"Thanks," she said. "I believe I was a little faint. Will you get my cloak?" And then, until her cloak came, she sat quiet, like a tired child, with her head resting wearily on the railing.

"The next dance but one is Richard's," she said, as he wrapped the soft, white cloak around her tenderly. "I must not slight him. But we will stay out here until then, unless you wish to go back—in which case I will not keep you with me."

"I shall not dance again to-night," he answered, "unless it is with you."

"I am engaged for every one of them, I am afraid. I could have been engaged three or four times over," she added, laughing. "I am sorry, Rupert, but ——"

"No matter," he interrupted her, almost rudely. "I must get used to it, I suppose." He was standing before her, looking down at her, and she, in her pretty, imperious way, laid her hand on his arm.

"You are cross to-night," she said. "Sit here beside me, and tell me what it is that troubles you."

He hesitated a moment; and then, with a reckless determination to disclose everything, and afterwards leave her for ever, he told her the story of his long love for her. Told her in a fierce, hard way, which almost frightened her, and yet made her reverence and admire him more, perhaps, than she had done before.

"I have loved you, Millicent. I love you now, more than you can imagine, and I have not told you because—because you are so far removed from me in every way. I feared you would think me mercenary. I feared—Oh, Millicent! Heaven only knows how I have loved you; how I have longed to tell you, and yet I have not had the courage. Now it is too late, either for harm or good. I shall pray for your happiness always with the man whom you have chosen."

"What do you mean, Rupert?"

The profound wonder in her voice made him hesitate. "I have heard of your engagement to Mr. Worthington."

"Who has told you *that?*" she asked. But in the same moment Richard Worthington stepped through the low window, and came toward them.

"I have been searching for you everywhere," he said, laughing in his boyish, good-natured way. "It's my dance, most respected cousin Millicent." And she was forced to go, without another word to the man beside her.

"Have you and Mr. Thornbury been quarrelling?" said Richard; who, to do him justice, was entirely innocent of any thought of Mrs. Kathlane, or of anybody else, as a wife. "He looked black as a thunder-cloud, and you are pale."

"I was a little faint after the waltz," she answered. "Don't tease me, Dick;" and so Richard desisted from his inquiries.

Meanwhile Rupert Thornbury, left alone with only his own thoughts for company, sat as utterly and entirely wretched as a man can feel but once in his lifetime. Inside the rooms the music kept untiringly on; the gay dancers floated past the windows; every face was bright with smiles. Outside here, in the darkness, a man sat alone, struggling bravely to lift his cross and bear it uncomplainingly.

How long he sat there he knew not, but at last he roused himself, and rose to his feet. "I must go back," he said. "Cornelia Granger will have a delicate bit of gossip if she sees me here."

So he went in and showed himself, and said a few words to Miss Granger, and strolled about he knew not whither, talking to one, talking to another; and presently found himself up stairs near the library.

The library door was ajar, and as he entered, a little figure all in silvery blue and soft white lace, with scarlet buds glowing and burning here and there, turned and advanced a step toward him. There were tears in the great black eyes, and the red lips were trembling like a grieved child's.

"Was it untrue, Millicent?"

"Every word of it. Dick, indeed! Oh, Rupert!"

He clasped her hands almost rudely.

"You are not engaged?"

Only a look answered him. He caught her to him, pouring forth all the sweet love-vows that he had sensitively refrained from before: and Millicent whispered that she never should be engaged, unless it was to him.

A pity but Miss Cornelia Granger had chanced to look into the library.

After waiting so many years!

HARRY FURNISS.

J. SWAIN

# THE ARGOSY.

*FEBRUARY* 2, 1874.

## IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

### CHAPTER V.

EDITH WEST.

THE London clocks were just striking midday as a gentleman drove up to the door of No. 6, Roehampton Terrace, Bayswater. It was Lionel Dering. He had reached London two days previously, but he would not venture to call on Edith West without first writing to her aunt and obtaining the requisite sanction. Mr. Garside had been dead nearly a year, but Edith and her aunt still continued to live together. In his note to Mrs. Garside, Lionel simply said that by a sudden change of fortune he was again in a position to pay his addresses to Miss West, and he solicited her permission to allow him to do so. Mrs. Garside was only too happy to bid him welcome to Roehampton Terrace. Indeed, it is by no means improbable that she would have welcomed him had he gone to her on the same errand without a shilling in the world. She had discovered long ago that Edith was too faithful to the memory of her first love for there to be much hope that a second one would ever find a place in her heart. As Mrs. Garside had said to herself a score times since her husband's death, "It would be far better for Edith to marry Mr. Dering without a penny than for her never to marry at all. Edith's fortune, if managed with economy, would suffice to keep them in tolerable comfort—not in London, perhaps, but in some quiet country place, or in some cheap corner of the Continent; and Edith is one of those girls who can make themselves happy anywhere."

Under these circumstances, it is hardly to be wondered at that Mrs. Garside was very glad to see Lionel Dering under her roof again, more

especially as he did not come to her in the disagreeable guise of a poor man. Tears came into her eyes as she held out her hand to him—genuine tears, for Mrs. Garside was one of those women who can weep on the slightest provocation. "It will be like new life to our darling Edith to have news of you once more," she said.

"Then she has not quite forgotten me?" said Lionel, eagerly.

"Forgotten you, Mr. Dering! How little you know of our sex if you think it possible for us so soon to forget those to whom our young affections have once been given."

"Is she—is Edith here in the house?" asked Lionel.

"She was in her own room only five minutes ago. I can understand your impatience, Mr. Dering, and will not keep you from her. I have refrained from saying a word to her about either your note or your visit. You shall yourself be the bearer of your own good tidings."

Three minutes later Lionel found himself in the presence of Edith. Mrs. Garside opened the door and ushered him in. The room was a very pleasant one, furnished with books, pictures, and curiosities of various kinds. At the farther end it opened into a small conservatory, which looked one dazzling mass of bloom as you entered the room. And there, sweetest flower of all, sat Edith, her face and figure clearly defined against a background of delicate ferns.

"Edith, dear, I have brought a long-lost friend to see you," said Mrs. Garside, as she and Lionel entered.

Edith dropped her book, and started up in surprise. Lionel was half hidden behind Mrs. Garside, and for the moment Edith mistook him for a stranger. But he had not advanced three paces before she saw who he was, and in a moment she was as one transformed. Her mouth dimpled into smiles, tears came nestling into her eyes—tears of happiness—her heart beat fast, her cheeks flushed to the tint of the wild rose when its petals first open to the sun, and with a little inarticulate cry of joy she sprang forward to greet her lover. She sprang forward, and then she halted suddenly, while a look of sadness clouded her face for a moment. With a sigh that ended in a half sob she held out her hand. Lionel grasped it in both his.

"How long you have been away!" she said as her eyes met his. Mrs. Garside slipped discreetly out of the room, and shut the door softly behind her.

Lionel lifted Edith's hand to his lips and kissed it. Then he looked at her with the same eager, anxious gaze that she had bent on him—he looked and was satisfied. His heart told him that he was still loved as fondly as ever he had been. Edith, too, after that first hungry look, veiled her eyes modestly, but there was a wild whirl of happiness at her heart. Lionel drew her face up to his, and kissed her twice very tenderly. Then he led her to the sofa, and sat down beside her.

"Yes; I have been a very long time away," he said at last. "But I

am come to-day, Edith, to ask you to keep me by your side through life —never more to let me wander from you."

Edith, in the first shock of her surprise, was too happy to speak. But her fingers tightened almost imperceptibly on his hand, and her face, resting on his shoulder, where he had placed it, nestled still closer: her silent answer was more eloquent than any words.

"Edith, I left you—my letter told you why," went on Lionel. "But all through the long dreary time when I was separated from you, my love for you never faltered, never wavered for one single moment. If I had never seen you again in this world, my heart's last breath would still have been yours. Yesterday I was poor—to-day I am rich, Once more I can ask you, as I asked you three years ago, to be my wife. Do not tell me that I am asking for more than you can give."

Edith's faith in Lionel was so full and complete, her love for him so deep-rooted, that she never paused — as many young ladies would have done—before giving him back the affection which had all along been his, to demand from him the reason for his apparent desertion of her three years before. In that first flush of new-born happiness it was enough to know that her lover had come back to her: the why and the wherefore of his leaving could be explained afterwards.

"You know, Lionel, that my love is yours always—that it has been yours for a long, long time," said Edith, in accents that trembled a little in spite of herself. "But I never received any letter from you after that last one dated from some far-away town in America."

"No letter!" exclaimed Lionel. "Not one explaining my reasons for releasing you from your engagement?"

"Never a single line, Lionel."

"But I gave the letter into your uncle's hands," returned Lionel. "He promised faithfully that he would give it you."

"He did not give it me," answered Edith. "Perhaps he kept it back because he thought it better that I should not see it."

"He had no right to do anything of the kind," said Lionel, sternly. "The letter was sacredly entrusted to him, and ought as sacredly to have been delivered to you."

"Lionel, my uncle is no longer with us," said Edith, gently. "You and I are together again. That redeems all. Let us never say another word about the letter."

"What a villain, what a mean wretch, you must have thought me," cried Lionel impulsively, "to break off my engagement without assigning you any reason! Without even a single word of explanation!"

"I thought you nothing of the kind," said Edith, with decision. "I knew you too well not to feel sure that you must have good and sufficient reasons for acting as you did. Although you did not tell me what

those reasons were—whatever may have been my disappointment at your silence—my faith in you never wavered."

"But when weeks and months passed away, and you never heard from me ——"

"I felt then that all was over between us; felt it in a despairing, hopeless kind of way. But I cherished no resentment against you—none."

"But surely your uncle and aunt had some explanation to offer?"

"They told me that, through the failure of a bank, you had lost the whole of your fortune, and that, consequently, you had resigned all pretensions to my hand."

"And you?"

"I thought that you might have called to see me; or, at least, have written to me. I could not understand why, if you still continued to care for me, you should choose to give me up simply because you had lost your fortune."

"You could not understand it?"

"Indeed I could not. And I fail to understand it now. If you were poor, I was rich. What greater happiness could I have than to endow you with my plenty? When I gave you my love, it meant that I gave you everything I could call mine."

"You look at the question from a woman's point of view, Edith: I, from a man's."

"If I had lost my fortune as you lost yours, would you have given me up?" asked Edith.

"Certainly not."

"Nor I you. With me, to love and to be loved is everything. In comparison with that all else is as nothing."

"Edith, I could not come to you penniless, and ask you to become my wife. When I found myself a poor man, I had no profession to fly to; I was acquainted with no business. I was a great hulking good-for-nothing, able to plough and reap, and earn a bare crust by the sweat of my brow, and that was all. How was it possible for me to become a dependent on you for my daily bread?"

"You would not have been a dependent, Lionel. My money would have been yours, just as my love was yours."

"Still a woman's view, my dearest," said Lionel. "The noblest and the best, I at once admit. Only, the world would never have believed that I had not married you for your fortune."

"You and I together, Lionel, could have afforded to set the world's opinion at defiance."

Lionel ended the argument with a kiss.

A fair, sweet English face was that which nestled so lovingly on Lionel's shoulder. Edith West had large liquid dark brown eyes. Her eyebrows and eyelashes were nearly black, but the thick wavy masses

of her hair had no shade deeper than that of chestnuts in autumn. The tints of the wild-rose dwelt in her cheeks. About her there was a freshness, a sweetness, and a delicate grace, like that of a breezy morning in spring, when flowers are growing, and birds are singing, and all nature seems glad at heart.

"You are in mourning, Lionel," said Edith, suddenly.

"Yes; I have just lost my uncle, Mr. St. George, of Park Newton."

"I never remember to have heard you speak of him."

"Probably not. I never even saw him, never had any communication with him whatever. Nevertheless, it is to him that I owe my fortune

"It has come to you unexpectedly?"

"Entirely so. Three days ago I should have laughed at the idea of being my uncle's heir: now they tell me that I am worth eleven thousand a year."

"It sounds like a fairy tale," cried Edith. "What a strange man your uncle must have been!"

"When the will was read," returned Lionel, "my first thought was of you. I said to myself: 'Has Edith forgotten me? Has she given me up? Am I too late?' I trembled to think what the answer might be. Now I tremble no longer."

"It is sweet, Lionel, to have you here, and to know that you are my own again," replied Edith. "But how much sweeter it would have been if you had come to me when you were poor, and had trusted everything to my love!"

A week passed away, each day of which saw Lionel Dering a visitor in Roehampton Terrace. Edith and he were much together. It was the happiest time they had ever known. All the freshness of their recent meeting was still upon them; besides which, their long separation had taught them to value each other more, perhaps, than they would have done had everything gone smoothly with them from the first. The weather, for an English winter, was brilliant, and they rode out every morning into the country. Of an evening, Edith, Lionel and Mrs. Garside had the drawing-room all to themselves; and although an "exposition of sleep" generally came over the elder lady after dinner, the young people never seemed to miss her society, nor were they ever heard to complain that the time hung heavily on their hands

They were very happy. They had so much to tell each other about the past—so many golden day-dreams to weave of what they would do in the future! Edith could never hear enough about Lionel's life at Gatehouse Farm, and about his adventure with Tom Bristow; while Lionel found himself evincing a quite novel interest in the well-being of sundry ragged-schools, homes for destitute children, and other philanthropic schemes of whose very existence he had been in utter ignorance only a few days before.

But everything must come to an end, and after a time there came a summons from Mr. Perrins. Lionel was wanted down at Park Newton. The old lawyer could go on no longer without him. So Edith and he were compelled to bid each other farewell for a week or two. Meanwhile, the post was to be the daily medium for the interchange of their vows and messages.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FIRST DAYS AT PARK NEWTON.

THE dining-room at Park Newton. A cosy little table, with covers set for two people, was drawn up near the fire. The evening was cold and frosty. The wax-candles were lighted, the logs on the hearth burned cheerily. A large Indian screen shut in this end of the room from the wilderness of gloom and desolation beyond; for the dining-room at Park Newton would accommodate fifty or sixty guests with ease. The clock on the mantel-piece pointed to ten minutes past seven. Lionel Dering was growing impatient.

"Perrins is generally punctuality itself," he said. "What can have detained him? I hope he is not ill."

He was on the point of ringing the bell, and sending the servant with a message to the lawyer's room, when Mr. Perrins came in. With many apologies for being late, he sat down to table; but Lionel saw at once that he was bursting with some important news. As soon as the first course was served, and the servant had left the room, Perrins began.

"I have some very startling information for you, Mr. Dering," he said. "My late arrival at table is owing to a certain discovery which I made about an hour ago."

"I hope you are not going to tell me that my eleven thousand a year is all moonshine," said Lionel, as he helped the lawyer to some clear soup.

"No, no, Mr. Dering. The news I have to tell you is not quite so bad as that, and yet it is bad enough in all conscience. While going through some of your uncle's papers this afternoon—you know what a quantity of them there are, and in what disorder he kept them—while engaged upon this necessary duty, I discovered—what think you, sir? what think you?"

"Another will, I suppose," said Lionel, slowly.

"Not another will, but a codicil, sir; a codicil to the will with whose provisions we are already acquainted; in the handwriting of the testator himself, witnessed in due form, and dated only three months ago!"

"And what may be the contents of this important document?" asked Lionel, as he crumbled his bread with apparent indifference.

"The contents are these: Should you, Lionel Dering, die unmarried or without lawful issue, the whole of the property bequeathed you by your uncle's will reverts to your cousin, Mr. Kester St. George, or to his children, should you be the longer liver of the two."

"Is that all?" said Lionel, with a sigh of relief.

"All, sir! Quite enough, too, I should say, if I were in you place."

"Nobody can touch the property as long as I live?"

"Certainly not."

"Then a fig for the rest! Shall I send you a sole or some stewed eels?"

"It is quite a relief to me to find how coolly you take my news; though it is true your uncle could not well have made the contingency of your cousin's inheriting a more remote one."

"Tell me," said Lionel, "have you either seen or heard anything of Kester since my uncle's death?"

"I have heard from him, but not seen him. He wrote to me a few days after your uncle's funeral, asking me to send him an abstract of the contents of the will. He gave an address in Paris, and I answered his letter by return of post."

"An address in Paris!" exclaimed Lionel. "That is very strange. I never felt more positive of anything than that my cousin Kester passed me on Westminster Bridge on the very night of my uncle's funeral."

"A coincidence, my dear sir, nothing more," said the lawyer, cheerfully. "Such things happen every day in London. It would almost seem as if every man had his double—a sort of unknown twin-brother —somewhere in the world."

Lionel pursued the subject no farther, but he was none the less convinced in his own mind that it was Kester, and no one but him, that he had seen. Could he ever forget the look of undying hatred that shone out of his cousin's eyes?

"You have not yet advised Kester of the contents of the codicil?" he said at last.

"I have not had time to do so. I purpose writing to him this evening: unless you wish me to defer doing so until you have satisfied yourself as to the authenticity of the document."

"My dear sir, if you are satisfied that the document is genuine, that is enough for me. Write to my cousin, by all means, and as soon as possible. By-the-by, you may as well give me his address. I shall probably drop him a line myself."

"I may as well tell you," said Mr. Perrins, as he gave the address, "that the balance of six thousand and odd pounds, which I found to your uncle's credit in his bank pass-book at the time of his decease represents, with the exception of a few shares in one or two public companies, the accumulated savings of Mr. St. George's lifetime."

"What! out of an income of eleven thousand a year?"

"Even so. When your uncle died, everybody who had known him, and who knew his simple, inexpensive mode of life, said: 'He must have saved a hundred thousand pounds at the very least.' But the reverse of that has proved to be the fact. In going through Mr St. George's papers, I found numerous receipts for very large donations made by him to different charities. He seems to have received his rents with one hand and to have given them away with the other. In fact, your uncle was one of those unknown philanthropists of whom the world hears nothing, but whose wealth, like a bounteous stream, diffuses countless blessings among the sick and poor."

"And yet," said Lionel to himself, "this was the man who refused to forgive his own sister because he fancied that she had married beneath her!"

Mr. Perrins went off to bed at an early hour, after indulging in a due modicum of choice old port; but Lionel sat up till far into the small hours, with no companion but his favourite meerschaum.

His musings were very pleasant ones. How could they be otherwise? Not till to-day had he seemed to realize to the full all that was implied by his sudden change of fortune. In London he was nobody, or next to nobody; one rich man among ten thousand. Here, at Park Newton, he was lord and master of everything. This gray old mansion, with its wide sweep of park, and its noble trees which might be counted by hundreds, were all his, with many a fair and fruitful farm that now lay sleeping under the midnight moon. To the gracious shelter of that stately old roof he would in a little while bring his bride. There would their lives gradually wear themselves away in a round of daily duties, edged with a quiet happiness that never tires. In one or other of those rooms their last breath would ebb away: in the long gallery upstairs two more portraits would be added to the line of dead and gone ancestors. And then would come the day when a new master, his son, would reign at Park Newton, who would, in his turn, bring home a fair young bride, and would dream, perchance in that very room, in the dim years to come, dreams the like of those which the brain of Lionel Dering was shadowing forth to-night among the smoke-wreaths that floated slowly upward from his pipe.

But before that time should come there was, he hoped and thought, a long and happy future in store for himself and Edith. As he passed with his candle through the dim picture-gallery on his way to bed, each one of the old portraits seemed to greet him with a grim smile of welcome. With a queer, half-joyous, half-superstitious feeling at his heart, he turned at the gallery door. "Bon soir, messieurs," he said, with a bow to the silent crowd that seemed watching him so intently. I hope—after a time—to form one of your pleasant society."

Lionel was up betimes next morning, and took a stroll round the

house and shrubberies before breakfast. Park Newton dated from the era of William and Mary, and had little to boast of in the way of architectural magnificence. It was built of brick, with a profusion of stone copings, and mullions, and twisted chimneys. But its walls were now gray and venerable with age, powdered with lichens and delicate fairy mosses, and clasped about here and there with clinging tendrils of ivy. Everything about it was old and homelike. It had an air of stately comfort which seemed to carry back the mind instinctively to the days of periwigs and ruffles, of clouded canes and buckled shoes; before we English had become the gadabout race we are now; when a country gentleman's house was his home the whole year round, and country roads were altogether impassable in bad weather.

Lionel had not been many hours at Park Newton before he began to have visitors. The county families and neighbouring gentry who had known the late Mr. St. George either called or left their cards. Lionel was young and unmarried, and would be a decided acquisition to the limited circle of Midlandshire bachelors: that is to say, of eligible bachelors. Of ineligible bachelors there were always enough and to spare. But the advent of such a possible prize—of a bird with such splendid plumage as the new owner of Park Newton—was enough to send a pleasurable thrill through all the dovecotes within a circuit of twenty miles. Of the existence of a certain young lady, Edith West, by name, nothing, of course, was known or suspected.

One of the first to call at Park Newton, and introduce himself to Lionel, was the Reverend John Wharton, the vicar of Duxley. Mr. Wharton was an octogenarian, but hale and hearty; as far as appearances went, he seemed likely to last for another twenty years.

"My having known your uncle, the late Mr. St. George, must be my apology for intruding upon you so soon," he said, as he shook Lionel warmly by the hand. "And not your uncle only, but your grandfather also. And now I should like to know you."

"You are very kind," said Lionel. "And I appreciate the honour you have done me."

"There was another member of the family, too, whom I recollect very well," said the vicar, as they sat together in the library. "I refer to your mother."

"Did you know my mother?" asked Lionel, eagerly.

"I did indeed. I remember her first as a sweet slip of a girl, playing and romping about the house and grounds. Then I missed her for three or four years while she was away at school. Then she came back, a sedate young lady, but very, very pretty. How fond your grandfather was of her! But he never forgave her for running away and marrying your father—never, that is, until he lay dying."

"Do you mean to say, sir, that my grandfather ever did forgive my mother?"

"Certainly he forgave her, but not till he lay on his deathbed. I was in the room at the time and heard his words. Taking your uncle's hand in his, your grandfather said—and his words came very slowly and feebly:—'Arthur, life and its duties look very different, as I lie here, from what they did when I was in health. It lies on my conscience that I never forgave poor Dorothy. It's too late to send for her now, but send her my blessing after I'm gone, and say that I loved her to the last.' He shut his eyes, and was silent for a little while. Then he spoke again. 'Arthur,' he said to your uncle, 'is it your intention ever to marry?' 'I shall never marry, father,' was the answer. 'Then who's to have Park Newton, after your time?' 'It will not go out of the family, you may depend upon that, father,' said your uncle. 'Some time or other it will have to go to one of the two boys,' resumed your grandfather; 'either to Dorothy's boy, or to Geoffry's son, Kester. Now I don't want to tie you down in any way, Arthur, but I confess I should like Dorothy's lad to have Park Newton. He could change his name to St. George, you know. Young Kester might have a life allowance out of the estate of two or three thousand a year, and there would still be enough left to keep up the old place in proper style. I feel that I have acted wrongly to Dorothy. There is some reparation due to her. If I thought that her boy would one day have the estate, I think I should die happier.' 'Father, it shall be as you wish,' said Arthur St. George, solemnly."

"A promise that was made only to be broken," said Lionel, bitterly. "I have heard my mother say that the first intimation she had of my grandfather's death was derived from the columns of a newspaper. Further than that, my uncle Arthur never wrote a single line to my mother; never would even see her; never hold any communication with her, direct or indirect, to the last day of her life."

"You shock me," said the old clergyman. "Can that indeed be true?"

"I tell you, sir," said Lionel, "that this is the first time I ever heard of any such wish having been expressed by my grandfather. Two months ago I had no more expectation than you had of ever coming into the Park Newton property. My cousin Kester was always looked upon as the heir."

"He was, greatly to my surprise, knowing what I knew. Your uncle adopted him and brought him up as his own son."

"And, had it not been for some mysterious quarrel that took place between my uncle and my cousin, Kester St. George would undoubtedly at this moment have been the owner of Park Newton."

"What you say seems only too probable," said the vicar. "And yet I always looked upon Mr. St. George as one of the most

conscientious of men, as he was, undoubtedly, one of the most charitable."

"A pity that in this case his charity did not begin nearer home," said Lionel. "That must have been a terrible quarrel," he added presently, "which could induce my uncle to alter the determination of a lifetime, and leave the property away from my cousin."

"True," said the vicar. "I have often wondered of what nature it could be. But Mr. St. George never spoke of it to anyone. He was a very close man in many ways."

There was much food for thought in what Mr. Wharton had just told Lionel. "My grandfather intended me to have Park Newton, and I've got it," he said to himself, after the vicar had gone. "But it was also his wish that Kester should have two or three thousand a year out of the estate. I'll write to Perrins to know how it can be done."

Mr. Perrins had gone back to London a few hours previously. Lionel wrote to him by that night's post. Next morning but one he had the following answer: "By the terms of your uncle's will and codicil you have no power to make any such allowance out of the estate as the one suggested by you. You can, of course, make any allowance you may please, and to anybody, privately, and as a gift out of your own pocket; but it is not competent for you to burden the estate with any charge of such a nature."

Would his cousin accept three thousand a year from him as a gift? It was a delicate proposition to put to a man circumstanced as was Kester St. George.

Lionel had not been many days at Park Newton when he was called upon by Mr. Cope, the banker, with whom came Mr. Culpepper of Pincote.

Mr. Cope was the senior partner in the firm of Sugden and Co., the well known bankers of Duxley. The late Mr. St. George had had an account with the firm for twenty years, which account Mr. Cope was desirous of still retaining on his books, with nothing but a simple alteration of the customer's name.

Squire Culpepper was a friend of Mr. Cope, and had been an intimate friend of Mr. St. George; consequently, it was only natural that he and the banker should drive over to Park Newton together. Lionel gave them a hearty welcome. The banker was successful in the particular object of his visit, and was further gratified by Lionel's acceptance of an invitation to dine with him, en famille, the following day.

"Pincote ought by rights to have been your first place of call," said Mr. Culpepper to Lionel as he was bidding him good-bye. "But Cope here has stolen a march on me, as usual. However, I'll forgive him if you'll come and see us at Pincote before this day week."

Lionel laughed and promised.

Mr. Cope was a heavily-built, resolute-looking man of middle age, with a brusque business manner, which had become so confirmed in him by habit that he could not throw it off in private life. He had neither the education nor the manners of a well-bred gentleman, but he inspired respect by the shrewdness of his intellect, and a certain innate force of character which made itself felt by all with whom he came in contact. His father had originally been office-boy to the firm of Sugden and Co., but, in the course of thirty years, had gradually worked his way up to the honourable post of managing clerk. Ultimately, three or four years before his death, he had been elevated to a junior partnership. Already young Horatio Cope, although merely filling the position of an ordinary clerk in the bank, had displayed such natural aptitude as a financier that, when his father died, the vacant post was at once given him, and the firm had never had reason to regret the choice thus made. As time went on, the two oldest members of the Sugden family died within a few months of each other. Two or three years later the youngest of the three brothers was accidentally drowned. Of the original firm there then were left but two young men, of three or four and twenty, cousins, who knew little or nothing about the business, who were rich enough to live without it, and who preferred a life of ease and pleasure to the cares and toils which must devolve on those who would successfully steer a large financial concern through the troubled waters of speculation. In this crisis all that could be done was to fall back on Horatio Cope. He was master of the situation, and he knew it. The result was that he was offered a partnership in the firm on equal terms with the two cousins. They were to supply the capital necessary for the conduct of the business, but the entire management was to devolve on him. All this had happened several years ago; and in Duxley and its neighbourhood few men were better known, or more generally esteemed, than Mr. Cope.

He was a very proud man, this heavy, awkward-looking, middle-aged banker. His secret ambition was to obtain a footing among the county families of Duxley and its neighbourhood, and to be treated by them, if not exactly as an equal, yet with as near an approach to that blissful state of things as might be. But, somehow, notwithstanding all his efforts, the old plebeian taint seemed still to cling to him. The people among whom it was his highest ambition to live and move simply tolerated him, and that was all. He was rich, and, to a certain extent, was still a rising man. He could be made use of in many ways. So he was invited to their state dinners, and sometimes to their more private balls and parties; but, for all that, he felt that he did not belong to them—that he never could belong to them—that he stood outside a magic circle which to him must be for ever impassable. It was only by slow degrees, and after a long time, that these disagreeable truths

were brought fully home to the banker's mind. But when he did realize them, he bethought himself that he had a son.

Mr. Cope's stanchest friend and best ally was, undoubtedly, Squire Culpepper, of Pincote. It had been the banker's good fortune, some thirty odd years ago, to be in a position to do an essential service to Titus Culpepper, at that time an impecunious young man, without a profession, and with no prospects in particular; and the squire, when he afterwards came into his property, was not the man to forget it. At Pincote the banker was ever a welcome guest; and if anyone had asked the squire to point out the man whom he believed to be his best friend, that man would undoubtedly have been Horatio Cope.

It was a great step in Mr. Cope's favour to be so taken in hand by a man like Mr. Culpepper, who, although only moderately rich, and a commoner, was the representative of one of the most ancient and respected families in the county, and could, in fact, show a pedigree older by two centuries and a half than that of the great Duke of Midlandshire himself. Squire Culpepper had only one child, a daughter; and it seemed to Mr. Cope that it would be an excellent thing if a match could be brought about between his son and the young lady in question. By marrying Miss Culpepper, his son would at once secure a position in society such as he himself could never hope to attain; and if, in addition, the young man could be smuggled into parliament, and could succeed in making one tolerably good speech there, why, then he thought that the great ambition of his life would be as near fulfilment as it was ever likely to be in his time. By what occult means Mr. Cope succeeded in inducing the squire to so far overcome the prejudices of caste as to agree to the marriage of his daughter with the grandson of a man who had lighted the fires and swept out the offices of Sugden's bank, was best known to himself. But certain it is that he did succeed; and the match was arranged, and the pecuniary conditions agreed to, before either of the two persons most interested so much as knew a word about it.

Squire Culpepper, at this time, was from fifty-five to sixty years old. He was a short, wiry, keen-faced man, with restless, fidgetty ways, and a firm belief in his own shrewdness and knowledge of the world. Except when dressed for dinner, his ordinary attire was a homely suit of shepherd's plaid, with thick shoes and gaiters. His head-gear was a white hat, with a black band, generally much the worse for wear. The Squire's shabby hats were known to everybody. His tongue was sharp, and his temper hasty, but he was as sweet and sound at heart as one of his own Ribstone pippins.

Mr. Cope had a fine, handsome modern-built house just outside Duxley. When Lionel arrived, he found his host in the drawing-room waiting to receive him. The Squire had not yet come. When he did

arrive, he was half an hour past his time. He apologised, on the ground that he had been to a sale of cattle some twenty miles off, and had not been able to get back earlier. It was obvious to Lionel, and doubtless to Mr. Cope also, that the Squire had been drinking—not inordinately, by any means, but just enough to make him more merry and talkative than usual. After dinner, some splended old port was put on the table; and it seemed to Lionel that the banker, while drinking nothing but an innocuous claret himself, kept pressing the decanter of port on the Squire's attention oftener than was at all necessary, and seemingly of set purpose. The Squire, nothing loth, smacked his lips, and drank glass after glass with evident gusto. As a consequence, he became more merry and communicative than ever. Had Lionel known at the time what a very rare occurrence it was for the Squire to allow himself to become, even in the slightest degree, the worse for wine, he might have asked himself whether the banker's object was not to obtain from him, while in that talkative mood, certain information which it would have been hopeless to expect him to divulge at any other time. But Lionel, knowing nothing of this, was entirely in the dark as to what Mr. Cope's object could possibly be.

"Did you buy any stock at Cottingly, to-day?" asked the banker.

"Not a single hoof," answered the Squire. "The prices were ruination. I'll keep my money in my pocket, and wait for better times."

"You know Cottingly, don't you?" he asked presently of the banker.

"Pretty well," answered Mr. Cope.

"Do you know Drake and Harding, the architects?"

"I've heard of the firm—nothing more. But if you want an architect, there's a clever young fellow here in Duxley."

"I know him. His name's Beakon. He's quite a fool."

"Quite a fool, is he?" said the banker, equably. "So be it."

"I've proved it, sir—proved it. No, Drake and Harding are the men for my money. Everything's settled. They'll bring the plans over to Pincote on Wednesday afternoon. If you have nothing better to do, you may as well drive over and help me to decide on the most suitable one."

"The plans! What plans?" said Mr. Cope, in astonishment. "You forget that I'm altogether in the dark."

"Why, what plans could I mean but the plans for my new house?" cried the Squire, as he refilled his glass. "I thought I had told you all about it weeks ago."

"This is the first time you have ever hinted at such a thing. But you don't mean to say that you are going to pull down Pincote!"

"I mean to say nothing of the kind," said the Squire, peevishly. "But, for all that, I may be allowed to build myself a new house if I choose to do so, I suppose?"

"Certainly—certainly," said the banker, with a look of deprecation.

"I know what you think."

"I beg your pardon."

"I say, sir, that I know what you think," repeated the Squire, with half sober vehemence. "You think that because I've reduced my balance during the last six months from nine thousand pounds to somewhere about three thousand, and because I've sold all my stocks and securities, that I've been making ducks and drakes of my money, and don't know what I'm about. But you never made a greater mistake in your life, Horatio Cope."

"You do me a great injustice, my dear Squire. No such thought ever entered my mind."

"Don't tell me. I know what you bankers are."

Mr. Cope shrugged his shoulders and looked at Lionel with the air of an injured man.

"You don't believe in any speculation unless you've a finger in the pie yourself," continued the Squire. "But other people have got their heads screwed on right as well as you. Why, man, I tell you that in less than six months from this time, I shall be worth an extra hundred thousand pounds at the very least."

"I'm truly delighted to hear it," said the banker, heartily. "No man will congratulate you with more sincerity than I shall."

"And you ought to be delighted to hear it, seeing that my daughter and your son will soon be man and wife. But, mind you, I don't mean to turn miser with it. I intend to build, and plant, and dig. You know that knoll in the park where the old Gothic summerhouse stands?"

"I know it well."

"That's the spot where I intend to build my new house. The young folk can have Pincote. I don't intend to pull the old place down. After I'm gone, of course the new place will be theirs as well. And, if I live, I mean to make it a place worth having."

The Squire refilled his glass. Mr. Cope, deep in thought, was absently drumming with his fingers on the table.

"Pincote is a very old place, is it not?" asked Lionel.

"It was built three hundred and fifteen years ago, and it's still as weather-proof as ever it was. But because one's great grandfather six times removed, chose to build a house, is that any reason why we shouldn't build another? At all events, I mean to try what I can do."

"The speculation you have hit upon must be something remarkable," said the banker, holding up a glass of wine before the lamp.

"It is. Something *very* remarkable," said Mr. Culpepper with a chuckle. "You would like to know the ins and outs of it, wouldn't you, now?"

"I should, indeed. It's too bad of you to keep such a good thing all to yourself."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the squire, in high glee. "I thought you would say that. You'll know all in good time, I daresay. But at present—it's a secret. That's what it is—a secret."

"Must have found a silver mine on his estate," said Mr. Cope, with a sly look at Lionel.

"Or a coal mine, which would be pretty much the same thing," returned Lionel.

The Squire laughed loud and long. "Ah! you're a sharp lot, you bankers," he cried. "But you don't know everything." And then he winked at Lionel.

Lionel was not sorry when the evening came to an end, and he found himself on his way back to Park Newton. "My first introduction to Midlandshire society is not very promising," he said to himself. "I hope to find it a little more entertaining by-and-by."

The Squire, after being safely helped into his dog-cart, was driven home by his groom.

Mr. Cope, after his guests were gone, stood for a full quarter of an hour with his back to the drawing-room fire, ruminating over the events of the evening. Judging by the settled frown on his face, his meditations were anything but pleasant ones. "My worst fears are confirmed," he said to himself. "Culpepper has been induced to speculate on his own account. His balance at the bank yesterday was only two thousand and odd pounds,—and every security disposed of! Some swindler has got hold of him, and the result will be that he will lose every penny that he has invested. Build himself a new mansion, indeed! Unless he's very careful, the Court of Bankruptcy will soon be the only mansion he can claim the right to enter."

At this moment his son, Edward, entered the room.

"Have you been to Pincote to-day?" said the banker.

"I have just returned from there," answered the young man.

"If I were you, Edward," said Mr. Cope, looking steadily at his son, "I wouldn't allow my feelings to become too closely entangled with Miss Culpepper. You're only on probation, you know, and I wouldn't —in short, I wouldn't push matters so far as to leave myself without a door of escape, in case anything should happen to—to—in short, you understand perfectly what I mean."

"You mean to say, sir ——" stammered the young man.

"I mean to say nothing more than I've said already," interrupted the banker. "My meaning is perfectly simple. If you cannot understand it, you are more stupid than I take you to be. Good night." At the door he turned. "Remember this," he added. "When you enter an enemy's country, never burn your boats behind you. Bad policy." And with a final nod, the banker was gone.

"Now, what on earth does he mean with his 'enemy's country,' and his 'burning boats'?" said Edward Cope, with a comical look of despair. "I wish some people would learn to talk plain English."

## CHAPTER VII.

### KESTER ST. GEORGE.

ALTHOUGH Lionel Dering had obtained Kester St. George's address in Paris from Mr. Perrins, he had not yet written to him. He put off writing from day to day, hardly knowing, in fact, in what terms to couch his letter. He could not forget the look he had seen in his cousin's eyes during their momentary recognition of each other on Westminster Bridge. Were they to be as friends or as enemies to each other in time to come? was the question Lionel asked himself times without number. At last he decided not to write at all, but to wait till Kester should return to England, and then see him in person.

After a fortnight at Park Newton, Lionel ran up to town. As a matter of course, his first visit was to Edith. His second was to Mr. Perrins. From the latter he ascertained that a copy of the codicil had been duly sent to Kester at Paris, but had not yet been acknowledged. Lionel's next visit was to the Dodo Club, in Pall Mall, o which club he had ascertained that his cousin was a member. "Yes, Mr. St. George was in town—had been in town for some days," said the hall porter, in answer to his inquiry. "Most likely he would look in at the club in the course of the afternoon or evening." On the spu of the moment, Lionel sat down and wrote the following note, which he left at the Dodo for his cousin: "Dear Kester, I am in town and should much like to see you. Drop me a line saying when and where I can have the pleasure of calling."

A few hours afterwards he had the following answer: "Old fellow—Come and breakfast with me to-morrow. Eleven sharp. Shall be delighted to see you."

The address given was 28, Great Carrington Street, West, at the door of which house Lionel's cab deposited him as the clock was striking eleven next morning.

Kester St. George's chambers were luxuriously fitted up. They seemed an appropriate home for a man of wealth and fashion. Kester, attired in a flowery dressing-robe, with a smoking cap on his head, was lounging in slippered ease before a well-furnished breakfast table. While there was no one to see him, he looked careworn and gloomy. He held an open letter in one hand, the reading of which seemed to have been anything but a source of satisfaction to him. "Won't wait more than another week, won't he!" he muttered.

"Not to be put off with any more of my fine promises, eh? If I were cleared out to-morrow, I couldn't raise more than a bare

two fifty — just an eighth of the two thousand Grimble says he must have out of me before seven days are over: and he means it this time. If I could only raise five hundred, that might satisfy him till I get a turn of luck. I wonder—as I've often wondered—whether Dering knows of that little secret down at Park Newton. How fortunate that he's coming here this morning! I'll pump him. If he knows nothing of it—why then, we shall see what we shall see. What with the diamonds and one thing or another, it ought to be good for five or six hundred at the very least. That must be Dering's knock."

"Dear boy! so pleased to see you! so glad to find you have not forgotten me!" were Kester's first words, accompanied by a hearty shake of the hand. All traces of gloom and depression had vanished from his face. He looked as if he had not a care in the world.

"I am not likely to forget you, Kester," said Lionel. "I should have hunted you up weeks back, but I heard that you were in Paris."

"So I was in Paris—only got here three days ago. What will you take, tea or coffee? I've something fresh here in potted meats that I can strongly recommend."

Kester St. George at this time was thirty-three years old. He was a tall, well-built man, with something almost military in his bearing and carriage. He had bold, well-cut, aquiline features, a clear, pale olive complexion, and black, restless eyes. Black, too, jet black, were his thick eyebrows and his heavy, drooping moustache: but already his hair had faded to an iron-grey. He had one of those rare voices—low, soft, and persuasive, but perfectly clear, which are far more dangerous to a woman's peace of mind than mere good looks can ever hope to be. It was a voice whose charm few men could resist. Yet it was so uniformly dulcet, it was pitched so perpetually in a minor key that some people came at last to think that through all its sweetness, through all that pleasant flow of words which Kester St. George could command at will, they could detect a tone of insincerity—the ring, as it were, of counterfeit metal trying to pass itself off as good, honest gold. But, then, some people are very fanciful—ridiculously so: and the majority of those who knew Kester St. George were satisfied to vote him a capital talker, and very pleasant company, and neither wished nor cared to know anything more.

"It must be eight or nine years, Li, since you and I met last," said Kester, as he helped his cousin to some coffee.

"Yes, about that time," said Lionel.

"You are so altered that I should hardly have known you again."

"I suppose so," answered Lionel. "But I should have known you anywhere."

"How?"

"By your eyes."

"Ah!" A pause, while Kester leisurely chipped an egg.

"Have you had any news lately from Uncle Lionel?"

"I have not had a letter from India for over six months."

"What a fine old boy he is! Do you know, Li, I was quite jealous of the way he took to you; making such a pet of you, and all that? He must be getting old now."

"I believe he is either fifty-nine or sixty."

"Quite time he left the service, and settled down at home for the remainder of his days. He must have made a pot of money out there, eh?"

"I don't think Uncle Lionel is one of the money-making kind."

"He must have some scrapings somewhere. I only hope he won't forget his graceless nephew Kester, when he comes to make his will. By-the-by, you have a brother out there, haven't you?"

"Yes. The only brother I have."

"Doing well?"

"Very well."

"Ah, here comes Pierre with a couple of Digby chicks. Famous relish. Try one. And how do you like Park Newton, Li?"

"I get to like it better as I become more familiar with it. It grows upon one day by day."

"Sweet old spot! For years and years I never dreamed that anyone other than myself would be its master after my uncle's death."

"We all thought the same," said Lionel. "You will give me credit for sincerity when I say that no one could have been more surprised than I was by the contents of Uncle Arthur's will."

"I know it; I know it. From the day I quarrelled with my uncle, I felt that my chance was gone for ever. It was only right that you should be made the heir, vice Kester in disgrace. If there had been no such person as you in existence, the property would have been left either to your brother or to Uncle Lionel. If they had both been dead, Park Newton would have gone to some hospital or asylum. In no case would a single shilling have ever come to me." Kester spoke with exceeding bitterness, and Lionel could not wonder at it. But his gloom did not last more than a minute or two. He shook it off lightly. "Che sarà, sarà," he said, with a shrug and a laugh. Then he rose and got his cigar-case. "Let us have a smoke," he said. "After all, life in Bohemia is very jolly. It is pleasant to live by one's wits at the expense of other people who have none. Fools fortunately abound in this world: while they are plentiful, men of brains need never starve." This was said with a sort of defiant cynicism that it pained Lionel to hear.

"Kester," he said, "something was told me the other day that I never heard of before; something that affects you."

"Something that affects me! What was it?" His tone was abrupt and full of suspicion.

"Mr. Wharton, the vicar of Duxley, told me that when my grandfather lay dying, he expressed a wish that if Uncle Arthur should die without children, the estate should come to me; but that an allowance of three thousand a year should be paid out of it to you as long as you lived."

"I have heard my uncle say many a time that my grandfather was in his dotage for months before he died," said Kester, contemptuously.

"Whether he was in his dotage or no, there is no doubt that such a wish was expressed by him. Strangely enough, his wish has come true as regards myself: why should it not come true in your case also?"

"Lionel Dering, what is that you mean?"

"Simply this: Three thousand a year out of the Park Newton property belongs morally to you, and ——"

"And you want to settle that sum on me?"

"I do."

"You propose, in all seriousness, to give me, Kester St George, three thousand a year out of your income of eleven thousand?"

"In all seriousness, that is what I propose to do."

Kester's face flushed deeply. He got up, walked across the room, and stood looking out of the window for two or three minutes.

"No! a thousand times no!" he exclaimed at last with startling abruptness. "I cannot accept your offer."

"Is not the sum large enough?" asked Lionel.

"Not one penny piece, Lionel Dering, will I ever accept at your hands!"

"But why not! What is your objection?"

"Do not ask me. I would not tell you if I could. Let it suffice that my objection is insuperable and—let us never talk about this again." He rang the bell violently. "Pierre, cognac and seltzer. Do you do anything in the racing line?" asked Kester in his lightest tone as Pierre left the room.

"Nothing. I'm as fond of a horse as any man, but I'm profoundly ignorant of racing, and I never bet."

"That's a pity, because I could have put you up to one or two good things for the spring meetings. Fine institution—betting," added Kester, as he lighted another cigar. "It is one of the pleasantest of our vices, when judiciously pursued. When we win, it is a source of double gratification: we not only put money into our own pockets, but we take it out of the pockets of other people."

"And when you lose?" said Lionel.

"To bear one's losses like a man of the world and a gentleman is to prove that the teachings of philosophy have not been in vain."

"May I venture to hope that, as yet, you have had no occasion to seek consolation in the teachings of philosophy?"

"I won four thousand over the last St. Leger."

"For the present, then, the Stoics are at a discount.—Kester," said

Lionel, abruptly breaking off the subject, "you won't object to come and see me at Park Newton?"

Kester was leaning back in his easy chair, watching the smoke-wreaths as they curled idly upwards from his cigar. His thick black eyebrows came together in a deep, meditative frown as he heard Lionel's question. For a minute or two he did not answer.

"Frankly, no. I'll come and see you," he said at last. "Why shouldn't I? It will pain me at first to go back to the old place as guest, where once I thought that I should be master. But, thank Heaven, I'm not one of the most impressionable of men, and the feeling will soon wear off. Yes, Lionel, I'll come and see you."

Lionel was pleased that he had succeeded so far. "Perhaps, after a time," he thought, "I may be able to persuade him to accept the three thousand a year."

"You will keep up the old place in proper style, I suppose?" said Kester presently.

"I shall live very quietly—at least for some time to come," said Lionel.

"Which means, I suppose, that you will see very little company, and not rest satisfied unless you can save two-thirds of your income. That you will breakfast and dine in that ugly little parlour which overlooks the fishpond, and snore by night outside the huge four-poster in the Griffin-room."

Lionel laughed his careless, good-hearted laugh. "To one count of your indictment I can plead guilty," he said. "I certainly have both breakfasted and dined in the parlour overlooking the fishpond. But, on the other hand, I have certainly never slept in the Griffin, which has been kept locked up ever since Uncle Arthur's death."

"Ah!" sighed Kester, and it sounded so like a sigh of relief or thankfulness that Lionel could not help noticing it. "No wonder you don't care to sleep in the Griffin," he added, after a brief pause. "With its oak-panelled walls, and its plumed bedstead that always put me in mind of a hearse, it used to give me a fit of horrors whenever I went into it; and yet my uncle would never sleep anywhere else."

It should be mentioned that the bedrooms at Park Newton were each of them individualised with a name—generally that of some bird, fish, or animal. Among others, there were the Dolphin, the Pelican, and the Griffin. Such had been the whim of one of the former owners of the place, and none of his successors had seen fit to alter the arrangement.

After a little more desultory conversation, Lionel rose to go. As he stood with his elbow resting on the chimney-piece, his eye was attracted by a brace of duelling pistols which hung on the wall close by. They were old-fashioned, clumsy-looking weapons, but deadly enough, no doubt, in efficient hands.

"With permission," said Lionel, as he took one down to examine. Kester took down the other. The one Lionel had taken was unloaded; the one in Kester's hands loaded—a fact of which Kester was quite aware. The day was dull, and Lionel took his pistol to the window, that he might examine it more closely. Kester stood by the chimney-piece on the other side of the room. As he stood thus, a terrible temptation took possession of him. "What if you were to kill him where he stands!" something seemed to whisper in his ear: and for a moment his whole being shrank back aghast. But for a moment only.

"I could shoot him dead on the spot, put the discharged pistol into his hand the moment after he had fallen, and no one could say that he had not shot himself. Park Newton would then be mine, and I should be revenged."

These thoughts flashed like lightning through Kester's brain. The room and everything in it seemed to recede and fade into nothingness—everything except that silent black-clothed figure by the window. Kester's heart beat strangely. His breath came in hot gasps. There were blood-red motes in his eyes—blood-red motes falling everywhere. Mechanically, and without any conscious volition on his part, his right arm went up to a line with his shoulder. The barrel was pointed straight at Lionel's head.

He paused and trembled. In another moment, for good or for ill, would have come the climax. Suddenly, and without warning, Pierre, the velvet-footed, flung open the door. "A telegram for you, sir," he said. "The messenger is waiting."

The pistol fell from Kester's nervous grasp. Lionel looked up and was saved.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A MIDNIGHT INTRUDER.

LIONEL DERING found himself back at Park Newton three days earlier than he had intended. Mrs. Garside's sister in Paris having been suddenly taken ill, Mrs. Garside was telegraphed for to go over. She begged of Edith to accompany her. Lionel ran down with them as far as Dover, saw them safely on board the steamer, and then bade them good-bye.

There being no longer any attraction for him in London, he decided to go straight through to Park Newton, as several matters there claimed his attention, and he went accordingly. He reached home about seven o'clock in the evening, much to the consternation of Mrs. Benson, his housekeeper, who had not expected him till the end of the week, and who was in the midst of a high festival of scrubbing and scouring. Among other places, Lionel's bedroom was in a topsy-turvy condition, and altogether unfit for occupation; so that Mrs. Benson, with many apologies, was compelled to ask him whether he would object to sleep

in another room for that night only. Lionel, who was the most good-natured of men with his servants, made no objection to the change.

After his simple dinner was over, Lionel spent an hour among his letters and papers, and then took a cigar and his travelling cap with the intention of having a quiet smoke in the shrubbery. The night was clear and cold. There was no moon, but the stars were shining brightly. The footways were dry and pleasant to walk on, and Lionel lingered outside for nearly an hour, winding in and out among the maze of walks, and the thick clumps of evergreens, wherever his vagrant footsteps led him. His thoughts were with Edith. He was thinking of the time, so soon to come, when they should pace those pleasant walks together; when that dim old pile, which looked so majestic in the starlight, should call her mistress. There would be their home through all the happy years to come. His heart was full of solemn joy and gratitude: unbidden tears stood in his eyes: he felt that Heaven had been very kind to him. Then and there he registered a promise that the sick, the aged, and the poverty-stricken on his estate—and he knew already that they were many in number—should be made the special care of Edith and himself.

He was slowly retracing his steps when, as he turned the corner of a thick clump of holly only a few yards from the house, to his utter surprise he nearly stumbled over a man, who started up, from under his very feet as it seemed, and plunged at once into the depths of the shrubbery on the other side. For the moment Lionel was too much startled to think of pursuit, and a second thought convinced him that it would be useless to attempt any. The trees were thickly planted just there, and that part of the grounds was quite strange to him besides, would it be worth his while to follow the intruder? The man, whoever he might be, had evidently been hiding, and had certainly no business there; but, in all probability, he was merely some young fellow from the village who had been sweethearting with one of the servants at the Hall, and had stayed beyond his time.

Nevertheless, when Lionel reached the house, he decided that, for once, he would look after the fastenings of the windows and doors himself. When he had satisfied himself that everything was secure, he took his candle and went off to his bed in the Dolphin. He was very tired and soon fell asleep. But Lionel had a trick—begotten of the time when he lay camping out in the wilds of North America, and had to sleep with his loaded rifle resting on his arm, and in constant dread of a surprise by hostile Indians—of waking up at the slightest noise at all out of the common way: waking up in a moment, completely, fully, and with all his wits about him. The old instinct did not desert him on the present occasion. He had been asleep for a couple of hours or so, when he was recalled in a moment from the land of dreams to life the most vivid and conscious, by the overturning of some heavy

piece of furniture in the room immediately over that in which he was sleeping. He sat up in bed and listened with all his senses on the alert. But all was again as silent as the grave.

After two or three minutes he lay back in bed, still listening, but not so keenly as before; and trying to make out, from his knowledge of the house, which particular room it was from whence the noise proceeded that he had just heard.

All at once it struck him—and the thought sent a chill through his heart—that the room in question was none other than the Griffin—none other, in fact, than the room in which his Uncle Arthur had died. The more he thought of it, the more certain he felt that he was right. It was the Griffin without doubt. But what could any living being be doing in that room of all others, and at that hour of the night? The room had been left untouched since his uncle's death, and, as far as he, Lionel, was concerned, was likely to be so left for some time to come.

It was always kept locked, too, although the key was not taken away but left outside the door; and all the servants, from Mrs. Benson downwards, had a superstitious dread of entering it. How, then, account for the noise he had heard, which certainly came from that room and from no other? With such thoughts in his mind, to sleep again, for some time to come, was out of the question. A quarter of an hour, or it might be twenty minutes, passed thus, and the silence was still unbroken. Then there came a sound, and Lionel started involuntarily as he heard it. It was the faint sound of footsteps—the noise made by some one moving slowly and cautiously across the floor of the room above. It was so faint, so muffled, so subdued, that at any other time than the middle of the night, and to any ears less keen than those now listening with all their might, it would have been altogether inaudible. If, for a moment, he had shivered at the recollection that it was in that very room his uncle had breathed his last—if, for a moment, some vague ghostly fancies had flitted across his mind, it was for a moment only. Involuntarily, and without any consciousness on his part, his mind seemed, in some strange way, to connect the dim half-seen figure that had melted before his eyes into the shrubbery, with the mysterious footsteps overhead.

It was the work of a very short time for Lionel to slip out of bed, light his candle, and partially dress himself. He had no weapon of any kind in his room, but, man against man, he was not afraid of anyone; and that there was more than one person up stairs seemed highly improbable. He opened his room door as noiselessly as possible, and stole out into the corridor. He had to traverse one long passage, ascend a flight of stairs, and there, at the end of another passage, was the door of the room he was in quest of.

It was the state bed-room of the house, this room called the Griffin. None of the rooms near it were occupied: the servants all slept in the

opposite wing. Had Lionel slept in his own room that night, the unknown intruder would have had one whole wing of Park Newton entirely to himself—a fact that was probably well-known and calculated upon. Along the chilly corridor and up the oaken staircase, lighted candle in hand, stole Lionel step by step, slowly and without noise. At the top of the staircase he paused and listened. Two or three minutes passed in silence the most profound. Had not his senses deceived him? he asked himself. Was it, indeed, the sound of mortal footsteps that he had heard? or nothing more than some of the vague, unaccountable noises, born of night and the darkness — moans, whispers, the creaking of doors, the rustling of ghostly garments—such as may be heard during the mute hours of sleep in any old house in which several generations of people have lived and died?

Some such thoughts as these were wandering through his mind—he was still listening intently—when the candle he was carrying dropped down into the socket, flared up suddenly for a moment, and then went out. Stooping to place the candlestick on the ground, and turning his head as he did so, what was his surprise to see a thin, faint streak of light shining from under the door at the end of the corridor! The sight of this braced his nerves like a tonic. A few swift strides brought him to the other end of the passage. It was the work of a moment to turn the key and fling wide open the door.

The late Mr. St. George's bedroom was a large but gloomy apartment, panelled with black oak, and having in one corner a huge funereal-looking bedstead, plumed and carved, and with a quantity of faded gilding about it, that matched well with the faded colours of the painted ceiling overhead. When Lionel flung open the door, an exclamation of surprise burst involuntarily from his lips. The cloaked figure of a man, with his back towards Lionel, and holding a dark lantern in one hand, was standing in front of a small cupboard or recess in the panelling—a hiding place evidently; but what he was doing there Lionel had not time to see. A moment later and the lantern was shut, and he and the stranger were alone in the dark.

As Lionel sprang forward to seize him, the stranger turned to fly. As he did so, there was a noise of money falling to the floor. Lionel seized him by the cloak, but that came away in his hands. Then he grasped him again, this time by the shoulder, and held him firmly. With a growl like that of a wild beast suddenly trapped, the stranger turned on Lionel, and before the latter could guess what he was about, or could defend himself in any way, he jerked his right arm free, and swinging it round with all his strength, brought the butt-end of the pistol, which it held, crashing down on Lionel's head. Twice in quick succession was the terrible blow repeated, and then Lionel fell heavily to the ground and remembered nothing more.

(*To be continued.*)

## BREAKFAST WITH THE CASUALS

AN invitation to a breakfast at which we are to meet eight hundred guests takes us to Gray's Yard on the first Sunday of the New Year. This locality is known to few, though situated in the heart of West End London. It is but a stone's throw, so to say, from Portman Square. Walking down Lower Seymour Street and James Street, we reach an archway, beyond which we see a dense crowd, attracted thither by the summons that brings us. We join them, and find that they are besieging the door of the house of reception. What a crowd it is! Not "motley," for little colour shows, since all is sombre grey and black. A ragged crowd, gathered for a Ragged Breakfast! The title may be just and suggestive, but oh, how sad!

One bit of coloured respectability somehow opens a passage, and we are admitted. As we make our way up three flights of stairs, we are greeted by glad sounds of hymns. At the top of the house, we find ourselves in what is emphatically called a Ragged Church. It is so densely crowded that we reach the pulpit-platform with difficulty. The congregation are singing a hymn, accompanied by a gentleman on the harmonium, and each holds a printed sheet of hymns in his hand. One such is given to us, and we glance from it to the scene before us.

It is an "upper room, furnished and prepared," such as may have been the one in which our blessed Lord partook of His Last Supper. It embraces the whole upper story, is ventilated by seven large windows on one side, and has an ecclesiastically raftered roof. Spanning this roof and the length of the room, at intervals, are leaf-wreathed, crimson-grounded texts, or rather one verse of the 9th chapter of Isaiah, subdivided. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

On the walls are other short texts, warning against sin, entreating to repentance, and encouraging to hope. All are artistically worked and arranged. Beneath a clock in the centre is a hand with its finger pointing upwards to the motto "Time flies."

It is, indeed, already half-past ten, and few of the three hundred and twenty-two men before us have broken fast this New Year's Sabbath. Yet most of them sing heartily and not untunefully. They must have learnt that hymn in Auld Lang Syne—these now weary, sin-soiled, hunger-stricken human beings. It ceases, and they sit down. It surprises us to remark—having read much to the contrary—that the expression of their faces is rather dejected than brutal, rather stolid

than hardened. Here and there only we think to see the felon-mark. Some care has been bestowed to coax the neglected hair into neatness, and most of the faces are clean. They are so close together that we cannot see the "rags," and but for previous information, these pauper casuals, as they are called, would have appeared to us an ordinary congregation of the poor. But we scarcely observe a speck of white amongst them: for their coats are buttoned to the chin to atone for the deficiency of the unknown luxury of shirt or collar.

While making these brief observations, Mr. Frank Bevan, the President, inaugurates the addresses, speaking himself discreetly and fraternally. We use the word advisedly, for how could he reach the hearts of these sad people but by addressing them as brother to brother? We hear him call, by turns, on the Rev. Mr. Moore, Mr. Hanbury, Sir Thomas Chambers, and Mr. Denham Smith, to speak to these, their brethren in Christ. And as sermon follows sermon, each earnest preacher discourses from heart to heart. Words that burn, entreaties, promises, sympathies, fall on those dull ears, and quicken them to listening. One poor fellow, who has kept his face covered with his long, grimy hands, removes them to dash away his tears. He must have seen better days, and a different society. It is said that there is more than one, formerly of good position, and many of good education, amongst these our fallen brothers. God help them! We see many tears, glistening in this bright New Year sunshine, called forth by chance allusions to a mother's prayers, an innocent boyhood, or the crowning theme, a Saviour's Sacrifice. The deep well of feeling is reached, and let us be thankful it is not dry.

The hungry souls listen with unwearied attention. Either reports exaggerate or the "ragged" improve; for the well-clad could scarcely seem more devout. When the last speaker winds up with the announcement of the coming meal, and "A Happy New year to you all," he is answered by a quiet "Thank'ee, sir.—The same to you, sir," which sounds more like the chant of a penitential psalm than a thanksgiving. Another hymn and the blessing, and the breakfast begins in earnest.

Fumes of coffee and cocoa wind in agreeably: the ladies who have volunteered as helpers receive paper bags of food from their male aids and distribute them, and in time, each white mug is filled. The guests wait with a patient, immovable endurance and we wonder if they are really hungry. Our curiosity surpasses theirs, for we inquire the contents of the bags of one who, waiting for the coffee, has not opened it. It is well repaid, however. Each neatly folded parcel contains a meat pie of about a pound's weight, two thick slices of bread-and-butter, a half-pound currant bun, and an orange.

Yes, they are hungry! for they set to work with a will at last. But as a rule, they do not eat greedily, but pause to answer our questions and to volunteer remarks.

Here are a dozen young men in one row eager to talk, it would seem. One poor fellow is all rags, hollow-faced and unkempt. His foot is swathed in linen, and he says he cannot work because he is ill. He has neither home nor friends. His neighbour is similarly circumstanced. The next has come up from Birmingham in search of work. "I am a printer by trade," he says, "but my sight is bad, and I lost my place. I thought to get something to do in London, but it is full already." Another, intelligent-looking and well-spoken, pours out his complaint, and seems so honest we are fain to believe him, in spite of the "cunningly devised fables" of his class.

"I have fallen, and once down 'tis hard to get up again. I want to begin to be religious this new year, and I can't; for I must tell a dozen lies to get a bed to-night—and how can one be religious and tell lies? I must go to the workhouse to sleep, and say I come from where I don't, slept last night where I didn't, to be let in. Then to-morrow morning they'll keep me picking oakum till eleven o'clock, too late for a day's work. If I try to get sent out as an emigrant, they say I'm not strong enough. I wish good people would form a society to show such as we how to emigrate, and help us. I mean to set out for the Yorkshire mines to-morrow, two hundred miles—but by the time I'm there, I shall be so tired and look so bad that they won't employ me. And I've got no boots."

Mr. Edmunds, the zealous honorary-secretary being near, we turn inquiringly to him, and learn that could funds be procured for a depôt of cast-off clothing, difficulties such as these could occasionally be remedied. He also confirms the statement concerning emigration, adding, that not long since he was requested to select ten able-bodied men from amongst his casuals who would emigrate. He found them readily, and took them to the appointed place; but they were rejected because *they had never been in prison!*

Leaving the men to their rare enjoyment of a breakfast, we go down, stairs to a room filled with women. Here the addresses by Miss Stewart and other ladies, together with the meal, are over, so we can only try to consider the effect produced. It must be favourable, for the poor souls look almost cheerful. If to be warm is to be happy, they are happy for once in their weary lives. Women are more easily comforted than men, and they respond emphatically to our good wishes and inquiries as they rise to depart. "We have had a good word from the lady," says one. "And a capital breakfast," another. "God bless the ladies and gentlemen," a third. Most of them are carrying away a portion of the provisions, for the children—we were about to say at home—but, as one forlorn-looking woman assures us, they have no home. And so they leave their hospitable entertainers with "God bless you—and "A Happy New Year."

Another room and yet another crowded to excess, where we hear of

Dr. Habershon and Mr. Chadwick, as chairmen, and other philanthropic gentlemen as aids. They are still talking to their no longer famished guests, who seem content to sit on while they may.

We make little ventures with one and another on the subject of work. "I gets a bit when I can, but the days is short now." "It have been a mild winter, and that helps us through, but as the days grows longer, the cold grows stronger." "I haven't had none for a fortnight." "We'd work and be thankful if we could get it," are samples of the replies. The men are certainly more dejected than the women, and we notice two amongst them quite blind.

That many of them would work if they could is even admitted by the kindly though sceptical policeman at whose side we find ourselves at last to watch the egress of the multitude—to see eight hundred and twenty, mostly houseless, wanderers return to the dens whence they came. As they leave the door, each receives a small copy of one of the gospels, presented by a good friend of the cause, and we hear one woman say, "I've got St. Luke this year, I had St. John last; that's lucky." All open, and glance with a strange curiosity into the tiny treasure, numbers unconscious of its meaning. We have not realized until now their actual condition. Seated in masses, they did not look so different from the rest of us; but as they walk through the yard by twos and threes, their rags, dirty finery, bedrabbled skirts, and utter wretchedness, become only too apparent. "Walk" is scarcely an apt word; their gait is, as the late Dr. Guthrie expressed it in his touching description of a sunday service he held here not long before his death, "a feckless shuffling." They shamble along like rickety machines, as if their legs were not made to support their bodies. One here and there may be said to walk, and he, the policeman tells us, has been pretty surely a soldier. The eyes that were fixed with such a steady light, awhile since, on the preachers become shy and suspicious as they glance round. Yet the grateful gleam returns to them as they respond awkwardly to our "good-byes." The unexpressed gratitude for a kind word is more painful than speech.

Surely there is no end to this stream of wretchedness! No sooner has it apparently flowed out than another meets it and flows in. A little crowd, "too late" for the breakfast, or unprovided with tickets, have been waiting with dogged patience, two good hours at the door. They are invited in when the rooms are cleared, and are furnished with the welcome bags of edibles. But there is nothing to drink! Although one gentleman provided a thousand cups of cocoa, in addition to the ample supply of coffee, not a drop remains. A miserable, wan, tattered youth says, as he returns our greeting, "There's no drink left, and I *be* so cold!" He takes the little gospel instead, and humbly passes on. May it prove a "fountain of living water" to him.

While the second lesser stream slowly drifts back again, we pause to

survey the building. It is of substantial brick, raised, we are informed, where a cow-house, surmounted by a dwelling, once stood. Although this good work has been in progress since 1835, it has only been carried on here during the last year or so. And what a work it is. Hither come Sunday after Sunday, five or six hundred men and women, in search of food both for soul and body. Of these "waifs and strays," as it is the fashion to call them, few come twice. If one tide drifts them here, another carries them to a distant shore, and so they float hither and thither on the turbid ocean of this our metropolis.

But they are not the only refuse of our streets made welcome in this house. Sunday and weekly schools invite alike infant and adult, and are well attended. Here, also, are Bible, singing, and sewing classes, prayer meetings, Dorcas, maternal and pure-literature societies, a penny bank and library—and beyond all, a Sunday Rest Union, and Band of Hope.

Who shall say that evil outweighs good in this vast wilderness of London? Institutions arise to meet every upspringing need. But of all needs, none is greater than that of raising the abject from despair, and bringing the soul-blind from darkness to light. This was Christ's work on earth—this is the work of Gray's Yard Ragged Church and School. They need help. Let all help them who can.

ANNE BEALE.

## THE LOVERS' HOUR.

BY MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS.

WHEN the evening sun goes down, and the daisies close their eyes;
Ere dusk wrinkles to a frown, or the stars blink in the skies;
When the dew and zephyrs light woo the perfume from the flower,
When the day is meeting night is the lovers' hour.

Gloaming is the trysting time; hardest outlines soften then;
Common mortals grow sublime; love and twilight soften men.
Feelings hidden from the light shrink not to assert their power,
And when day is wooing night is the lovers' hour.

Twilight veils with kindly grace blushes burning on the cheek,
When the timid upturned face coyly answers eyes that speak;
Lip meets lip, its troth to plight, rapture keen is love's sweet dower;
Then,—when day is kissing night is the lovers' hour.

# PITCHLEY'S FARM.

IT stood on the left-hand side of the road as you went towards Alcester: a good looking, red brick house, not large, but very substantial. Everything about it was in trim order; from the emerald-green outer venetian window-blinds to the handsome iron entrance gates between the enclosing palisades; and the garden and grounds had not as much as a stray worm upon them. Mr. Brandon was nice and particular in all matters, as old bachelors mostly are; and he was especially so in regard to his home.

Careering up to this said house on the morning of a fine spring day, when the green hedges were budding and the birds sang in the trees, went a pony gig, driven by a gentleman. A tall, slender young fellow of seven-and-twenty, with golden hair that shone in the sun and eyes as blue and bright as the sky. Leaving the pony to be taken care of by a labouring boy who chanced to be loitering about, he rang the bell at the iron gates, and inquired of the answering servant whether Mr. Brandon was at home.

"Yes, sir," was the answer of the man, as he led the way in. "But I am not sure that he can see you. What name?" And the applicant carelessly took a card from his waistcoat pocket, and was left in the drawing-room. Which card the servant glanced at as he carried it away.

"Mr. Francis Radcliffe."

People say there's sure to be a change every seven years. Seven years had gone by since the death of old Mr. Radcliffe and the inheritance by Francis of the portion that fell to him; three hundred a year. There were odd moments when Frank, in spite of himself, would look back at those seven years; and he did not at all like the retrospect. For he remembered the solemn promise he had made to his mother when she was dying, to put away those evil habits which had begun to creep upon him, more especially that worst of all bad habits that man, whether young or old, can take to—*drinking*—and he had not kept the promise. He had been called to the Bar in due course, but he made nothing by his profession. Briefs did not come to him. He just wasted his time and lived a fast life on the small means that were his. He pulled up sometimes, turned his back on folly, and read like a house on fire: but his wild companions soon got hold of him again, and put his good resolutions to flight. Frank put it all down to idleness. "If I had work to do, I should do it," he said, "and that would keep me straight." But at the close of this last winter he had fallen into a most dangerous illness, resulting from the draughts of ale, and what not, that

he had made too free with, and he got up from it with a resolution never to drink again. Knowing that the resolution would be more easy to keep if he turned his back on London and the companions who beset him, down he came to his native place, determined to take a farm and give up the law. For the second time in his life some money had come to him unexpectedly; which would help him on. And so, after a seven years' fling, Frank Radcliffe was going in for a change.

He had never stayed at Sandstone Torr since his father's death. His brother Stephen's surly temper, and perhaps that curious warning of his mother's, kept him out of it. He and Stephen maintained a show of civility to one another; and when Frank was in the neighbourhood (but that had only happened twice in the seven years), he would call at the Torr and see them. The last time he came down, Frank was staying at a place popularly called Pitchley's farm. Old Pitchley—who had lived on it, boy and man, for seventy years—liked him well. Frank made acquaintance that time with Annet Skate; fell in love with her, in fact, and meant to marry her. She was a pretty girl, and a good girl, and had been brought up to be thoroughly useful as a farmer's daughter: but neither by birth nor position was she the equal of Frank Radcliffe. All her experience of life lay in her own secluded, plain home: in regard to the world outside she was as ignorant as a young calf, and just as mild and soft as butter.

So Frank, after his spell of sickness and reflection, had thrown up London, and come down to settle in a farm with Annet, if he could get one. But there was not a farm to be let for miles round. And it was perhaps a curious thing that while Frank was thinking he should have to travel elsewhere in search of one, Pitchley's should turn up. For old Pitchley suddenly died. Pitchley's farm belonged to Mr. Brandon. It was a small compact farm; just the size Frank wanted. A large one would have been beyond his means.

Mr. Brandon sat writing letters at the table in his library, in his geranium-coloured Turkish cap, with its purple tassel, when his servant went in with the card.

"Mr. Francis Radcliffe!" read he aloud, in his squeaky voice. "What, is he down here again! You can bring him in, Abel—though I'm sure I don't know what he wants with me." And Abel went and brought him.

"We heard you were ill, young man," said Mr. Brandon, peering up into Frank's handsome face as he shook hands, and detecting all sorts of sickly signs in it.

"So I have been, Mr. Brandon; very ill. But I have left London and its dissipations for good, and have come here to settle. It's about time I did," he added, with the open candour natural to him.

"I should say it was," coughed old Brandon. "You've been on the wrong tack long enough."

"And I have come to you—I hope I am first in the field—to ask you to let me have the lease of Pitchley's farm."

Mr. Brandon could not have felt more surprised had Frank asked for a lease of the world, but he did not show it. His head went up a little, and the purple tassel took a sway backwards.

"Oh," said he. "*You* take Pitchley's farm! How do you think to stock it?"

"I shall take to the stock at present on it, as far as my means will allow, and give a bond for the rest. Pitchley's executors will make it easy for me."

"What are your means?" curtly questioned old Brandon.

"In all, they will be two thousand pounds. Taking mine and Miss Skate's together."

"That's a settled thing, is it, Master Francis!"—alluding to the marriage.

"Yes, it is," said Frank. "Her portion is just a thousand pounds, and her friends are willing to put it on the farm. Mine is another thousand."

"Where does yours come from?"

"Do you recollect, Mr. Brandon, that when I was a little fellow at school I had a thousand pounds left me by a clergyman—a former friend of my grandfather Elliot?"

Mr. Brandon nodded. "It was Parson Godfrey. He came down once or twice to the Torr to see your mother and you."

"Just so. Well, his widow has now recently died; she was very considerably younger than he; and she has left me another thousand. If I can have Pitchley's farm, I shall be sure to get on at it," he added in his sanguine way. For, if ever there was a sanguine, sunny natured fellow in this world, it was Frank Radcliffe.

Old Brandon pushed his geranium cap all aside and gave a flick to the tassel. "My opinion lies the contrary way, young man: that you will be sure not to get on at it."

"I understand all about farming," said Frank eagerly. "And I mean to be as steady as steady can be."

"To begin with a debt on the farm will cripple the best man going, sir."

"Oh, Mr. Brandon, don't turn against me!" implored Frank, who was feeling terribly in earnest. "Give me a chance! Unless I can get some constant work, some *interest* to occupy my hands and my mind, I might be relapsing back to the old ways again from sheer ennui. There's no resource but a farm."

Mr. Brandon did not seem to be in a hurry to answer. He was looking straight at Frank, and nodding little nods to himself, following out some mental argument. Frank leaned forward in his chair, his voice low, his face solemn.

"When my poor mother was dying, I promised her to give up bad habits, Mr. Brandon. I hope—I think—I fully intend to do so now. Won't you help me?"

"What do you wish me to understand by 'bad' habits, young man?" queried Mr. Brandon in his hardest tone. "What have been yours?"

"Drink," said Frank shortly. "And I am ashamed enough to have to say it. It is not that I have been a constant drinker, or that I have taken *much*, in comparison with what very many men drink, but I have, sometimes for weeks together, taken it very recklessly. *That* is what I meant by speaking of my bad habits, Mr. Brandon."

"Couldn't speak of a worse habit, Frank Radcliffe."

"True. I should have pulled up long ago but for those fast companions I lived amongst. They kept me down. Once amid such, a fellow has no chance. Often and often that neglected promise to my mother has lain upon me, a nightmare of remorse. I have fancied she might be looking down upon earth, upon *me*, and seeing how I was fulfilling it."

"If your mother was not looking down upon you, sir, your Creator was."

"Ay. I know. Mr. Brandon"—his voice sinking deeper in its solemnity, and his eyes glistening—"in the very last minute of my mother's life—when her soul was actually on the wing—she told me that she *knew* I should be helped to throw off what was wrong. She had prayed for it, and seen it. A conviction is within me that I shall be—has been within me ever since. I think this—now—may be the turning point in my life. Don't deny me the farm, sir."

"Frank Radcliffe, I'd let you have the farm, and another to it, if I thought you were sincere."

"Why—you *can't* think me not sincere, after what I have said!" cried Frank.

"Oh, you are sincere enough at the present moment. I don't doubt that. The question is, will you be sincere in keeping your good resolutions in the future."

"I hope I shall. I believe I shall. I will try with all my best energies."

"Very well. You may have the farm."

Frank Radcliffe started up in his joy and gratitude, and shook Mr. Brandon's hands till the purple tassel quivered. He had a squeaky voice and a cold manner, and went in for coughs and chest-aches, and all kinds of fanciful disorders; but there was no more generous heart going than old Brandon's.

Business settled, the luncheon was ordered in. But Frank was a great deal too impatient to stay for it; and drove away in the pony gig to impart the news to all whom it might concern. Taking a round to the Torr first, he drove into the back yard. Stephen came out.

Stephen looked quite old now. He must have been fifty years of age. Hard and surly as ever was he, and his stock of hair was as grizzled as his father's used to be before Frank was born.

"Oh, it's you!" said Stephen, as civilly as he could bring his tongue to speak. "Who's chay and pony is that?"

"It belongs to Pitchley's bailiff. He lent it me this morning."

"Will you come in?"

"I have not time now," answered Frank. "But I thought I'd just drive round and tell you the news, Stephen. I'm going to have Pitchley's farm."

"Who says so?"

"I have now been settling it with Mr. Brandon. At first, he seemed unwilling to let me have it—was afraid, I suppose, that I and the farm might come to grief together—but he consented at last. So I shall get in as soon as I can, and take Annet with me. You'll come to our wedding, Stephen?"

"A fine match *she* is!" cried cranky Stephen.

"What's the matter with her?"

"I don't say as anything's the matter with her. But you have always stuck up for the pride and pomp of the Radcliffes: made out that nobody was good enough for 'em. A nice come-down for Frank Radcliffe that'll be—old Farmer Skate's girl."

"We won't quarrel about it, Stephen," said Frank with his good-humoured smile.——"Here's your wife. How do you do, Mrs. Radcliffe?"

Becca had come out with a wet mop in her hands, which she proceeded to ring. Some of the splashes went on Frank's pony-gig. She wore morning costume: a dark-blue cotton gown hanging straight down on her thin lanky figure; and an old black cap adorning her hard face. It was a great contrast: handsome, gentlemanly, well-dressed, sunny Frank Radcliffe, barrister-at-law; and that surly boor Stephen, in his rough clothes, and his shabby, hard-working wife.

"When be you going back to London?" was Becca's reply to his salutation, as she began to rinse out the mop at the pump.

"Not at all. I have been telling Stephen. I am going into Pitchley's farm."

"Along of Annet Skate," put in Stephen; whose queer phraseology had been indulged in so long that it was become habitual. "Much good they'll do in a farm! He'd like us to go to the wedding!—No, thank ye."

"Well, good morning," said Frank, starting the pony. They did not give him much encouragement to stay.

"Be it true, Radcliffe?" asked Becca, letting the mop alone for a minute. "Be he agoing to marry Skate's girl, and get Pitchley's farm?"

"I wish the devil had him!" was Stephen's surly comment, as he stalked off in the wake of the receding pony-gig, giving his wife no other answer.

No doubt Stephen was sincere in his wish, though it was hardly polite to avow it. For the whole of Frank's life, he had been a thorn in the flesh of Stephen: in the first years, for fear their father should bequeath to Frank a share of the inheritance; in the later years, because Frank had got the share! That sum of three hundred a year, enjoyed by Frank, was coveted by Stephen as money was never yet coveted by man. Looking at matters with a distorted mind, he considered it a foul wrong done him; as no better than a robbery upon him; that the whole of the money was his own by all the laws of right and wrong, and that not a stiver of it ought to have gone to Frank. Unable, however, to alter the state of existing things he had sincerely hoped that some lucky chance—say the little accident of Frank's drinking himself to death—would put him in possession of it; and all the rumours that came down from London about Frank's wild life rejoiced him greatly. For if Frank died without children, the money went to Stephen. And it may as well be mentioned here, that old Mr. Radcliffe had so vested the three hundred a year that Frank had no power over the capital and was unable to squander it. It would go to his children when he died; or, if he left no children, to Stephen.

Never a night when he went to bed, never a morning when he got up, but Stephen Radcliffe's hungry heart gave a dismal groan to that three hundred a year he had been deprived of. In truth, his own poor three hundred was not enough for him. And then, he had expected that the six would all be his! He had, he said, to work like a slave to keep up the Torr, and make both ends meet. His two children were for ever tugging at his purse-strings. Tom, quitting the sea, had settled in a farm in Canada; but he was always writing home for help. Lizzy would make her appearance at home at all kinds of unseasonable times; and tell pitiful stories of the wants of her scanty ménage at Birmingham, and of her little children, and of the poor health and short pay of her husband the curate. Doubtless Stephen had rather a hard life of it and could very well have done with a doubled income. To hear that Frank was going to settle down to a sober existence and to marry a wife, was the worst news of all to Stephen, for it lessened his good chances finely.

But he had only the will to hinder it, not the power. And matters and the year went swimmingly on. Francis entered into possession of the farm; and just a week before Midsummer Day, he married Annet Skate and took her home.

The red light of the setting sun in June fell full on Pitchley's farm,

staining the windows a glowing crimson. Pitchley's farm lay in a dell, about a mile from Dyke Manor on the opposite side to Sandstone Torr. It was a pretty little homestead, with jessamine on the porch, and roses creeping up the frames of the parlour windows. Just a year had gone by since the wedding, and to-morrow would be the anniversary of the wedding day. Mr. and Mrs. Francis Radcliffe were intending to keep it, and had bidden their friends to an entertainment. He had carried out his resolution to be steady, and they had prospered fairly well. David Skate, one of Annet's brothers, a thorough, practical farmer, was ever ready to come over, if wanted, and help Francis with work and counsel and advice.

Completely tired with her day's exertions, was Annet, for she had been making good things for the morrow, and now sat down for the first time that day in the parlour—a low room, with its windows open to the clustering roses, and the furniture bright and tasty. Annet was of middle height, light and active, with a delicate colour on her cheeks, soft brown eyes, and small features. She had just changed her cotton gown for one of pink summer muslin, and looked as fresh as a daisy.

"Well, I *am* tired!" she exclaimed to herself, with a smile. "Frank would scold me if he knew it."

"Be you ready for supper, ma'am?" asked a servant, putting in her head. The only maid kept: for both Frank and his wife knew that their best help to getting on was economy.

"Not yet, Sally. I shall wait for your master."

"Well, I've put it on the table, ma'am; and I'm just going to step across now to Hester Bitton's, and tell her she'll be wanted here to-morrow."

Annet went into the porch, and stood there looking out for her husband, shading her eyes with her hand from the red glare. Some business connected with stock took him to Worcester that day, and he had started in the early morning; but Annet had expected him home earlier than this.

There he was, riding down the road at a sharpish trot; Annet heard the horse's hoofs before she saw him. He waved his hand to her in the distance, and she fluttered her white handkerchief back again. Thorpe, the in-door man, appeared to take the horse.

Francis Radcliffe had been changing for the better during the past twelvemonth. Regular habits and regular hours, and a mind healthily occupied, had done great things for him. His face was bright, his blue eyes were clear, and his smile and his voice were alike cheering as he got off the horse and greeted his wife.

"You are late, Frank! It is ever so much past eight."

"Our clocks are fast: I've found that out to-day, Annet. But I could not get back before."

He had gone into the parlour, had kissed her, and was disincumbering

his pockets of various parcels: she helping him. Both were laughing, for there seemed to be no end to them. They contained articles wanted for the morrow: maccaroons, and potted lampreys, and lots of good things.

"Don't say again that I forget your commissions, Annet."

"Never again, Frank dear. How good you are! But what is in this one? It feels soft."

"That's for yourself," said Frank. "Open it."

Cutting the string, the paper flew apart, disclosing a baby's cloak of braided white cashmere. Annet laughed and blushed.

"Oh, Frank! How could you!"

"Why, I heard you say you must get one."

"Yes—but—not just yet. It may not be wanted, you know."

"Stuff! The thing was in Mrs. What's-her-name's window in High Street, staring passers-by in the face; so I went in, and bought it."

"It's too beautiful," murmured Annet, putting it reverently into the paper as if she mistook it for a baby. "And how has the day gone, Frank? Could you buy the sheep?"

"Yes; all right. The sheep—Annet, who *do* you think is coming here to-morrow? Going to honour us as one of the guests?"

At the breaking off of the sentence, Frank had flung himself into a chair, and thrown his head back, laughing. Annet wondered.

"Stephen! It's true. He had gone to Worcester after some sheep himself. I asked whether we should have the pleasure of seeing them here, and he curtly said that he was coming, but couldn't answer for Mrs. Radcliffe. Had the Pope of Rome told me he was coming, I should not have been more surprised."

"Stephen's wife took no notice of the invitation."

"Writing is not in her line: or in his either. Something must be in the wind, Annet: neither he nor his wife has been inside our door yet."

They sat down to supper, full of chat: as genial married folks always are, after a day's separation. And it was only when the house was at rest, and Annet was lighting the bed-candle, that she remembered a letter lying on the mantel-piece.

"Oh, Frank, I ought to have given it to you at once; I quite forgot it. This letter came for you by this morning's post."

Frank sat down again, drew the candle to him, and read it. It was from one of his former friends, a Mr. Briarly; offering on his own part and on that of another former friend, one Pratt, a visit at Pitchley's farm.

Instincts arise to all of us: instincts that it might be well to trust to oftener than we do. A powerful instinct, *against* the offered visit, rushed into the mind of Francis Radcliffe. But the chances are, that, in the obligations of hospitality, it would not have prevailed, even had the chance been afforded him.

"Cool, I must say!" said Frank with a laugh. "Look here, Annet; these two fellows are going to take us by storm to-morrow. If I don't want them, says Briarly, I must just bolt the door in their faces."

"But you'll be glad to see them, won't you, Frank?" she remarked in her innocence.

"Yes. I shall like well enough to see them again. It's our busy time, though: they might have put it off till after harvest."

As many friends went to this entertainment at Pitchley's farm as liked to go. Mr. Brandon was one of them: he walked over with us —with me, and Tod, and the Squire, and the Mater. Stephen Radcliffe and his wife were there, Becca in a black silk with straps of rusty velvet across it. Stephen mostly sat still and said nothing, but Becca's sly eyes were everywhere. Frank and his wife, well dressed and hospitable, welcomed us all; and the board was well spread with cold meats and dainties.

Old Brandon had a quiet talk with Annet in a corner of the porch. He told her he was glad to find Frank seemed likely to do well at the farm.

"He tries his very best, sir," she said.

"Ay. Somehow I thought he would. People said 'Frank Radcliffe has his three hundred a year to fall back upon when he gets out of Pitchley's': but I fancied he might stay at Pitchley's instead of getting out of it."

"We are getting on as well as we can be, sir, in a moderate way."

"A moderate way is the only safe way to get on," said Mr. Brandon, putting his white silk handkerchief corner-wise on his head against the sun. "That's a true saying, He who would be rich in twelve months is generally a beggar in six. You are helping Frank well, my dear. *I* have heard of it: how industrious you are, and keep things together. It's not often a good old head like yours is set upon young shoulders."

Annet laughed. "My shoulders are not so very young, sir. I was twenty-four last birthday."

"It's young, that, to manage a farm, child. But *you've* had good training; you had an industrious mother"—indicating an old lady on the lawn in a big lace cap and green gown. "I can tell you what—when I let Frank Radcliffe have the lease, I took into consideration that you were coming here as well as he. Why!—who are these?"

Two stylish-looking fellows were dashing up in a dog-cart; pipes in their mouths, and portmanteaus behind them. Shouting and calling indiscriminately about for Frank Radcliffe; for a man to take the horse and vehicle, that they had contrived to charter at the railway terminus; for a glass of bitter beer apiece, for they were confoundedly dry—there was no end of a commotion.

They were the two visitors from London, Briarly and Pratt. Their

tones moderated somewhat when they saw the company. Frank came out; and received a noisy greeting that might have been heard at York. One of them trod on Mr. Brandon's corns as he went in through the porch. Annet looked half frightened.

"Come to stay here!—gentlemen from London!—Frank's former friends!" repeated old Brandon, listening to her explanation. "Fine friends, I should say! Here, Frank Radcliffe,"—laying hold of him as he was coming back from giving directions to his servant—"how came you to bring those men down into your home?"

"They came of their own accord, Mr. Brandon."

"Friends of yours, I hear?"

"Yes, I knew them in the old days."

"Oh. Well—*I* should not like to go shouting and thundering up to a decent house with more aboard me than I could carry. Those men have both been drinking."

Frank was looking frightfully mortified. "I am afraid they have," he said. "The heat of the day and the dust on the journey must have caused them to take more than they were aware of. I'm very sorry. I assure you, Mr. Brandon, they are really quiet, good fellows."

"May be. But the sooner you see their backs turned, the better, young man."

From that day, the trouble set in. Will it be believed that Frank Radcliffe, after keeping himself straight for ever so much more than a year, fell away again? Those two visitors must have found their quarters at Pitchley's farm agreeable, for they stayed on and on, and made no sign of going away. They were drinkers, hard and fast. They drank, themselves, and they seduced Frank to drink—though perhaps he did not require much seduction. Frank's ale was poured out like water. Dozens of port, ordered and paid for by Briarly, arrived from the wine merchant's; Pratt procured cases of brandy. From morning till night liquor was under poor Frank's nose, tempting him to sin. *Their* heads might be strong enough to stand the potions; Frank's was not. It was June when the new life set in; and on the first of September, when all three staggered in from a day's shooting, Frank was in a fever and curiously trembling from head to foot.

By the end of the week he was strapped down in his bed, a raving madman; Duffham attending him, and two men keeping guard.

Duffham made short work with Briarly and Pratt. He packed them and their cases of wine and their portmanteaus off together; telling them they had done enough mischief for one year, and he must have the house quiet for both its master and mistress. Frank's malady was turning to typhus fever, and a second doctor was called in from Evesham.

The next news was, that Pitchley's farm had a son and heir. They called it Francis. It did not live many days, however: how was a son

and heir likely to live, coming to that house of fright and turmoil? Frank's ravings might be heard all over it; and his poor wife was nearly terrified out of her bed.

The state of things went on. October came in, and there was no change. It was not known whether Annet would live or die. Frank was better in health, but his mind was gone.

"There's one chance for him," said Duffham, coming across to Dyke Manor to the Squire: "and that is, a lunatic asylum. At home he cannot be kept; he is raving mad. No time must be lost in removing him."

"You think he may get better in an asylum?" cried the Squire, gloomily.

"Yes. I say it is his best chance. His wife, poor thing, is horrified at the thought: but there's nothing else to be done. The calmness of an asylum, the sanatory rules and regulations observed there, will restore him, if anything will."

"How is *she?*" asked the Squire.

"About as ill as she can be. She'll not leave her bed on this side Christmas. And the next question is, Squire — where shall he be placed? Of course we cannot act at all without your authority."

The Squire, you see, was Frank Radcliffe's trustee. At the present moment Frank was dead in the eye of the law, and everything lay with the Squire. Not a sixpence of the income could anybody touch now, but as he pleased to decree.

After much discussion, in which Stephen Radcliffe had to take his share, according to law and order, Frank was conveyed to a small private asylum near London. It belonged to a Dr. Dale: and the Evesham doctor strongly recommended it. The terms seemed high to us: £200 a year: and Stephen grumbled at them. But Annet begged and prayed that money might not be spared; and the Squire decided to pay it. So poor Frank was taken to town; and Stephen, as his nearest male relative—in fact, his only one—officially consigned him to the care of Dr. Dale.

And that's the jolly condition things were in, that Christmas, at Pitchley's farm. Its master in a London madhouse, its mistress in her sick bed, and the little heir in Church Dykely churchyard. David Skate, like the good brother he was, took up his quarters at the farm, and looked after things.

It was in January that Annet found herself well enough to get upon her legs. The first use she made of them was to go up to London to see her husband. But the sight of her so much excited Frank that Dr. Dale begged her not to come again. It was, he said, taking from Frank one chance of his recovery. So Annet gave her promise not to do so, and came back to Pitchley's sobbing and sighing.

Things went on without much change till May. News came of

Frank periodically, chiefly to Stephen Radcliffe, who was the recognised authority in Dr. Dale's eyes. On the whole it was good. The improvement in him, though slow, was gradual: and Dr. Dale felt quite certain now of his restoration. In May the cheering tidings arrived that Frank was all but well; and Stephen Radcliffe, who went to London for a fortnight about that time and saw Frank twice, confirmed it.

Stephen's visit up arose in this way. One Esau D. Stettin (that's how he wrote his name), who owned land in Canada, came to this country on business, and brought news to the Torr of Tom Radcliffe. Tom had every chance of doing well, he said, and was quite steady—and this was true. Mr. and Mrs. Stephen were nearly as glad to hear it as if a fortune had been left them; for Tom was just the eye-apple of both. But, to ensure his doing well and to make his farm prosperous, Tom wanted no end of articles sent out to him: the latest improvements in agricultural implements; patent wheelbarrows, and all the rest of it. For Stephen to wring the money out of his pocket to purchase the wheelbarrows, was like wringing the teeth from his head; but as Esau D. Stettin—who was above suspicion—confirmed Tom's need of the things, Stephen decided to do it. He went up to London, to buy the articles and superintend their embarkation, and it was during that time that he saw Frank. Upon returning to the Torr, he fully bore out Dr. Dale's opinion that Frank was recovering his mind, was, in fact, almost well; but he privately told the Squire some other news that qualified it.

Frank's health was failing. While his mind was resuming its tone, his body was wasting. He was, Ste said, a mere shadow; and Dr. Dale feared that he would not last very long after complete sanity set in.

How sorry we all were, I need not say. With all his failings and his instability, everybody liked Frank Radcliffe. They kept it from Annet. She was but a shadow herself: had fretted her bones to fiddlestrings; and Duffham's opinion was that she stood a good chance of dwindling away till nothing was left of her but a shroud and a coffin.

"Would it be of any use, my going up to see him, poor fellow?" asked the Squire, sadly down in the mouth.

"Not a bit," returned Stephen. "Dale would be sure not to admit you: so much depends on Frank's being kept free from excitement. Why, he wanted to deny me, that Dale; but I insisted on my right to go in. I mean to see him again, too, before many days are over."

"Are you going to London again, Mr. Radcliffe?" asked the Squire, rather surprised. It was something new for Stephen Radcliffe to be a gad-about.

"I shall have to go, I reckon," said Stephen, ungraciously. "I've got to see Stettin before he sails."

Stephen Radcliffe did go up again, apparently much against his will, to judge by the ill words he gave to it. And the report he brought back of Frank that time was rather more cheering.

The Squire was standing one hot morning in the yard in his light buff coat, blowing up Dwarf Giles for something that had gone wrong in the stables, when a man was seen making his way from the oak-walk towards the yard. The June hay-making was about, and the smell of the hay was wafted across to us on the wings of the summer breeze.

"Who's that, Johnny?" asked the Pater: for the sun was shining right in his eyes.

"It—it looks like Stephen Radcliffe, sir."

"You may tell him by his rusty suit of velveteen," put in Tod; who stood watching a young brood of ducklings in the duck-pond, and the agonies of the hen that had hatched them.

Stephen Radcliffe it was. He had a stout stick in his hand, and his face was of a curious lead colour. Which, with him, took the place of paleness.

"I've had bad news, Mr. Todhetley," he began, in a low tone, without any preliminary greeting. "Frank's dead."

The Squire's straw hat, which he chanced to have taken off, dropped on the stones. "Dead! Frank!" he exclaimed in an awe-struck tone. "It can't be true."

"Just the first thought that struck me when I opened the letter," said Stephen, drawing one from his pocket. "Here it is, though, in black and white."

His hands shook like anything as he held out the letter. It was from one of the assistants at Dale's—a Mr. Pitt: the head doctor, under Dale, Stephen explained. Frank had died suddenly, it stated, without warning of any kind, so that there was no possibility of apprising his friends: and it requested Mr. Radcliffe to go up without delay.

"It is a dreadful thing!" cried the Squire.

"So it is, poor fellow," agreed Stephen. "I never thought it was going to be ended this way; not yet awhile, at any rate. For him, it's a happy release, I suppose. He'd never ha' been good for anything."

"What has he died of?" questioned Tod.

The voice, or the question, seemed to startle Stephen. He looked sharply round, as if he'd not known Tod was there, an ugly scowl on his face.

"I expect we shall hear it was heart disease," he said, facing the Squire and putting his back to Tod.

"Why do you say that, Mr. Radcliffe? Was anything the matter with his heart?"

"Dale had some doubts of it, Squire. He thought that was the cause of his wasting away."

"You never told us that."

"Because I never believed it. A Radcliffe never had a weak heart yet. And it's only a thought o' mine: he might have died from something else. Laid hands on himself, may be."

"For goodness' sake don't bring up such an ill thought as that, Stephen Radcliffe," cried the Pater explosively. "Wait till you know."

"Yes, I must wait till I know," said Stephen, sullenly. "And a precious inconvenience it is to me to go up at this moment when my hay's just cut! Frank's been a bother to me all his life, and he must even be a bother now he's dead."

"Shall I go up for you?" asked the Squire: who in his distress at the sudden news would have thought nothing of offering to start for Kamschatka.

"No good if you did," growled Stephen, folding up the letter that the Pater handed back to him. "They'd not as much as release him to be buried, Dale's lot, without me, I expect. I shall bring him down here," added Stephen, jerking his head sideways in the direction of the churchyard.

"Yes, yes, poor fellow—let him lie by his mother," said the Squire.

Stephen said a good morrow, meant for the whole of us; and had rounded the duck-pond on his exit, when he stopped, and turned back again to the Pater.

"There'll be extra expenses, I suppose, up at Dale's. Have I your authority to discharge them?"

"Of course you have, Mr. Radcliffe. Or let Dale send in the account to me, if you prefer it."

He went off without another word, his head down; his fat stick held over his shoulder. The Squire rubbed his face, and wondered what on earth was the next thing to do in this unhappy crisis.

Annet was in Wales with her mother at some seaside place. It would be a dreadful shock to her. Getting the address from David Skate, the Squire wrote to break it to them in the best manner he could. But now, a mischance happened to that letter. Welsh names are difficult to spell; the Pater's pen put L for Y, or X for Z, something of that kind; and the letter went to a wrong town altogether, and finally came back to him unopened. Stephen Radcliffe had returned then.

Stephen did not keep his word. Instead of bringing Frank down, he left him in London in Finchley Cemetery. "The heat of the weather," he pleaded by way of excuse when the Squire blew him up. "There was some delay; an inquest, and all that; and unless we'd gone to the expense of lead, it couldn't be done; Dale said so. What does it signify? He'll lie as quiet there as he would here."

"And was it the heart that was wrong?" asked the Pater.

"No. It was what they called 'effusion on the brain,'" replied Stephen. "Dale says it's rather a common case with lunatics, but he never feared it for Frank."

"It is distressing to think his poor wife did not see him. Quite a misfortune."

"Well, we can't help it: it was no fault of ours," retorted Stephen: who had actually had the decency to put himself into a semblance of mourning. "The world ud go on different for many of us, Squire, if we could foresee things."

And that was the end of Francis Radcliffe!

"Finchley Cemetery!" exclaimed Mr. Brandon, when he heard it. "That Stephen Radcliffe has been at his stingy tricks again. You can bury people for next to nothing there."

Poor Annet came home in her widow's weeds. In health she was better; and might get strong in time. There was no longer any suspense: she knew the worst; that was in itself a rest. The great doubt to be encountered now was, whether she could keep on Pitchley's farm. Mr. Brandon was willing to risk it: and David Skate took up his abode at the farm for good, and would do his best in all ways. But the three hundred a year income, that had been the chief help and stay of her and Frank, was gone.

It had lapsed to Stephen. Nothing could be said against that in law, for old Mr. Radcliffe's will had so decreed it; but it seemed a very cruel thing for every shilling to leave her, an injustice, a wrong. The tears ran down her pale face as she spoke of it one day at Pitchley's to the Squire: and he, going in wholesale for sympathy, determined to have a tussel with Stephen.

"You can't *for shame* take it all from her, Stephen Radcliffe," said the Squire, after walking over to Sandstone Torr the next morning. "You must not leave her quite penniless."

"I don't take it from her," replied Stephen, rumpling up his grizzled hair. "It comes to me of right. It is my own."

"Now don't quibble, Stephen Radcliffe," said the Squire, rubbing his face, for he went into a fever as usual over his argument, and the day was hot. "The poor thing was your brother's wife, and you ought to consider that."

"Francis was a fool to marry her. An unsteady man like him always is a fool to marry."

"Well, he did marry her: and I don't see that he was a fool at all for it. I wish I'd got the whip-hand of those two wicked blades who came down here and turned him from his good ways! I wonder how they'll answer for it in heaven."

"Would you like to take a drop of cider?" asked Stephen.

"I don't care if I do."

The cider was brought in by Eunice Gibbon: a second edition, so

far as looks went, of Mrs. Stephen Radcliffe, whose younger sister she was. She lived there as servant, the only one kept. Holt had left when old Mr. Radcliffe died.

"Come, Stephen Radcliffe, you must make Annet some allowance,' said the Squire, after taking a long draught and finding the cider uncommonly sour. "The neighbours will cry out upon you if you don't."

"The neighbours can do as they choose."

"Just take this much into consideration. If that little child of theirs had lived, the money would have been his."

"But he didn't live," argued Stephen.

"I know he didn't—more's the pity. He'd have been a consolation to her, poor thing. Come! you can't, I say, take all from her and leave her with nothing."

"Nothing! Hasn't she got the farm-stock and the furniture? She's all that to the good. 'Twas bought with Frank's money."

"No, it was not. Half the money was hers. Look here. Unless she get's help somewhere, I don't see how she is to stay on at Pitchley's."

"And 'twould be a sight better for her not to stay on at Pitchley's," retorted Stephen. "Let her go back to her mother's again, over in t'other parish. Or let her emigrate. Lots of folks is emigrating now."

"This won't do, Stephen Radcliffe," said the Squire, beginning to lose his temper. "You can't for shame bring everybody down upon your head. Allow her a trifle, man, out of the income that has lapsed to you: let the world have to say that you are generous for once."

Well, not to pursue the contest—which lasted, hot and sharp, for a couple of hours, for the Squire, though he kept getting out of one passion into another, would not give in—I may as well say at once that Stephen at last yielded, and agreed to allow her fifty pounds a year. "Just for a year or so," as he ungraciously put it, "while she turned herself round."

And it was so tremendous a concession for Stephen Radcliffe that nobody believed it at first, the Squire included. It must be intended as a thanksgiving for his brother's death, said the world.

"Only, Ste Radcliffe is not the one to offer thanksgivings," observed old Brandon. "Take care that he pays it, Squire."

And thus things fell into the old grooves again, and the settling down of Frank Radcliffe among us seemed but as a very short episode in Church Dykely life. Stephen Radcliffe, in funds now, bought an adjoining field that was to be sold, and added it to his land; but he and his wife and the Torr kept themselves more secluded than ever. Frank's widow took up her old strength by degrees, and worked and managed incessantly: she in the house, and David Skate out of it; to keep Pitchley's Farm together. And the autumn drew on.

The light of the moon streamed in slantwise upon us as we sat round

the bay-window. Tod and I had just got home for the Michaelmas holidays: and we sat talking after dinner in the growing dusk. There was always plenty to relate, on getting home from school. A dreadful thing had happened this last quarter: one of the younger ones had died at a game of Hare and Hounds. I'll tell you of it sometime. The tears glistened in Mrs. Todhetley's eyes, and we all seemed to be talking at once.

"Mrs. Francis Radcliffe, ma'am."

Old Thomas had opened the door and interrupted us. Annet came in quietly, and sat down after shaking hands all round. Her face looked pale and troubled. We asked her to stay tea; but she would not.

"It is late to come in," she said, some apology in her tone. "I meant to have been here earlier; but it has been a busy day, and I have had interruptions besides."

This seemed to imply that she had come over for some special purpose. Not another word, however, did she say. She just sat in silence, or next door to it: answering Yes and No in an abstracted kind of manner when spoken to, and staring out into the moonlight like anybody dreaming. And presently she got up to leave.

We went out with her and walked across the field; the Pater, I, and Tod. Nearly every blade of the short grass could be seen as distinctly as in the day. At the first stile she halted, saying she expected to meet David there, who had gone on to Dobbs the blacksmith on some errand connected with the horses.

Tod saw a young hare scutter across the grass, and rushed after it, full chase. The moon, low in the heavens, as autumn moons mostly are, lighted up the perplexity on Annet's face. It *was* perplexed. Suddenly she turned it on the Squire.

"Mr. Todhetley, I am sure you must wonder what I came for."

"Well, I thought you wanted something," said the Squire candidly. "We are always pleased to have you; you ought to have stayed tea."

"I did want something. But I really could not muster enough courage to begin upon it. The longer I sat there—like a statue, as I felt—the more my tongue failed me. Perhaps I can say it here."

It was a curious thing she had to tell, and must have sounded to the Squire's ears like a tale out of a ghost story. The gist of it was this: an impression had taken hold of her mind that her husband had not been fairly dealt with. In plain words, had not come fairly by his end. The Pater listened, and could make no sense of it.

"I can't tell how or when the idea arose," she said; "it seems to have floated in my mind so long that I do not trace the beginning. At first it was but the merest shadow of a doubt; hardly that; but it has grown deeper and darker, and I cannot rest for it."

"Bless my heart!" cried the Squire. "Johnny, hold my hat a minute."

"Just as sure as that I see that moon in the sky, sir," she went on, "do I seem to see in my mind that some ill was wrought to Frank by his brother. Mrs. Radcliffe said it would be."

"Dear me! What Mrs. Radcliffe?"

"Frank's mother. She had the impression of it when she was dying, and she warned Frank that it would be so."

"Poor Selina! But—my dear lady, how do you know that?"

"My husband told me. He told me one night when we were sitting alone in the parlour. Not that he put faith in it. He had escaped Stephen's toils until then, he said in a joking tone, and thought he could take care of himself and escape them still. But I fear he did not."

"Now what is it you do fear?" asked the Squire. "Come."

She glanced round in dread, and then spoke with considerable hesitation and in a low whisper.

"I fear—that Stephen—may have—murdered him."

"Mercy upon us!" uttered the Squire, recoiling a step or two.

She put her elbow on the stile and raised her hand to her face, showing out so pale and distressed under its white net border.

"It lies upon me, sir—a great agony. I don't know what to do."

"But it *could not* be," cried the Squire, collecting his scared senses. "Your imagination must run away with you, child. Frank died up at Dr. Dale's; Stephen Radcliffe was down here at the time."

"Yes—I am aware of all that, sir. But—I believe it was as I fear. I don't pretend to account for it; to say what Stephen did or how he did it—but my fears are dreadful. I have no peace night or day."

The Squire stared at her and shook his head. I am sure he thought her brain was touched.

"My dear Mrs. Frank, this must be pure fancy. Stephen Radcliffe is a hard and griping man, not sticking at a trick or two where his pocket is concerned, but he'd not do such a thing as this. No, no; surly as he may be, he could not be guilty of murder."

She took her elbow off the stile, with a short shiver. David Skate came into sight; Tod's footsteps were heard brushing the grass.

"Good night, sir," she hurriedly said; and was over the stile before we could help her.

And I hope to give you the upshot next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

# A NIGHT IN A MONASTERY.

*By the Author of* "A Month at Gastein."

THE Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse has been called an ugly building. Perhaps it has small claim to architectural beauty; but at the moment you first look upon it you cannot think of this. You are only struck by the unfamiliar aspect of the structure; by the fact of so extensive a pile rearing itself at this distance from the world; so far up this long steep pass so difficult of access; existing lonely and alone amidst the solemn, silent, everlasting hills.

The desolation of the spot strikes upon you with almost terror. It is a species of life in death; as it were, a living tomb: a habitation for men where men ought not to be; where nothing ought to be but the mountains themselves with their sad companions the pine trees, through which the winds go sighing and soughing as if chanting a perpetual requiem for the living-death tragedy that is ever being enacted there. In a moment the mind reverts to the men who are passing away their lives in this tomb—dead not to the world only, but almost dead to themselves and to each other, as far as all friendly intercourse is concerned.

You are transported into a fresh world. What can be the thoughts and inward experiences—such of them as possess thought—of these monks, living amidst this profound, unbroken solitude? Do any of them die out of themselves, losing their own identity in this inactive life? Do any become morbid, melancholy, insane, from the reaction of a daily routine of prayers and penances which may be performed at last as by a machine, narrowing the mind, deadening the spirit, dulling the senses? Do the more imaginative and romantic float into mysticism, seeing visions, passing through ecstasies, and treading in the footsteps of Madame Guyon and her class?

It is strange that women—some of them young, beautiful, and romantic—can be found to bury themselves for life in the death-like existence of a nunnery; it is a yet greater wonder that men, with man's strength, freedom of action, energy of intellect and character, should in like manner be also found to do so.

Coming suddenly upon the monastic pile, again far before its ugliness, a sense of its singularity strikes upon the traveller. The number of slanting roofs; the irregularity of the whole structure; the wall of enclosure, with its little pepperbox turrets every here and there rising up, like sentinels guarding a city; the short steeples of what you suppose to be chapels, and which afterwards prove to be so: the small windows of the long row of buildings attached to the main edifice, which turn out to be some of the cells of the monks. There is an entire absence

of the commonplace about it; quite different from anything to be found down in the world. It has an individuality and a character completely its own, just as its site is unique. It is the old and far famed Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, and you feel that you are gazing upon something you have never seen before, the like of which you will never look upon again.

Making way round to the front entrance, as fast as the thick snow permitted, we rang at the bell of the great gates—of which we give an illustration. The peal, long and sombre, went vibrating away in the distance. When this ceased there was utter stillness again; stillness more profound perhaps for the snow, which muffled every sound and footfall that might otherwise have given forth its own echo

DISTANT SIDE-VIEW OF THE CONVENT.

A few moments' pause, and the door was opened by a monk: one of the serving Brothers: dressed in a flannel gown and cowl, but wearing ordinary black shoes. A smile of welcome passed over his face as soon as he caught sight of us. At all times they must be glad enough to greet people from the outer world. It must seem almost like a meeting between life and death. He bade us enter.

Passing through the portals, and through a large court-yard, we entered the main building, a certain portion of which is devoted to the entertaining of strangers. At the entrance, he delivered us over to the care of an ordinary servant: a young man of some nineteen or twenty years; dressed in a blue blouse and coarse white apron: and placing his hand to his head in token of salutation he departed.

The youth led us down a somewhat narrow passage, into what is called

the Salle de Bourgogne, one of the refectories given over to the use of visitors. Another room we afterwards passed through was called the Salle de France, but it seemed of an inferior description, used either by the humbler class, or when the convent is unusually crowded.

The Salle de Bourgogne was a large, long room, with bare, white-washed walls: in the centre a long table of common deal wood, covered with a white cloth, coarse but clean; a round table of the same common wood, stood in the further left hand corner: a number of plain hard chairs were scattered about; opposite the door, at the further end as we entered, was a large cupboard for plates and dishes, and at this end, a locker containing some of the precious liqueur, for the fabrication of which the monks are so famous.

At the far end of the room two windows looked out upon a confined and dreary prospect; and three windows down the right side looked on to the cold and the snow, and the mountain forests: an arrangement was in one of the windows for washing glasses. Opposite these windows, down the left side of the room, three or four doors opened into cells set apart for the use of visitors. The wooden floor was perfectly bare, and the room was warmed by a round American stove, of which all the heat seemed to go up the chimney; very little of it certainly found its way elsewhere. Everything was of the plainest and roughest and most comfortless description, compatible with cleanliness and utility.

At the round table, dining, was seated a party of ten or twelve people, priests and laymen who had come up to visit the convent. A monk was attending upon them, dressed in a white flannel gown, his cowl thrown back, a thick girdle round his waist, from which was suspended a huge bunch of keys. As we entered, he came forward, welcomed us, placed chairs for us near the stove, and immediately brought out some liqueur from its capacious cupboard. Never was cordial more delicious, more thoroughly enjoyed, more gratefully received. After the cold, wet drive, the walk through the snow, perhaps nor the resources of a palace nor the suggestions of a doctor could have yielded a happier remedy. One glass tossed down, we felt tempted, like Oliver Twist, to ask for more; but the hospitable monk, noting our frost-bitten condition, waited not a bidding to replenish. Then he asked us if we would dine, and upon receiving an unmistakable reply, the usual repast given to guests was ordered.

Whilst this was preparing, he left us to ourselves and the consolations of the stove, and returned to his duties at the round table.

Seldom have I seen a more contented face: never could I have conceived a monk so jovial within those walls of silence, abstinence, and severity. His face was pale and close-shaven; his eyes were brown and keen, but soft and pleasant. His head, also shaven, was well shaped. In a quiet way, he joined in the conversation at the table; was not above uttering a harmless joke, and laughed at the jokes of

others; when he laughed, his whole face laughed; even his teeth—splendid teeth, white and regular—laughed; his fat, good-natured sides laughed as they shook in concert. It did one good to see him; to hear his rich, round voice chime in amongst the other voices; to see his eyes sparkling with intelligence and quiet humour. No mystic here; no dull despair, no clouded brain. What, in the many years gone by, could have persuaded him to retire from the world, and take these vows?

He was the Frère Procureur—the Frère Gérasime, as he told us afterwards—appointed to attend upon strangers, and take them over the monastery; absolved, for this reason, from the vow of silence.

The party he waited on had just ended their dinner. The faces of the priests were red and shining. A stream of laughter and joking ran round the table, as if all felt better for the repast. None present, of a surety, appreciated the liqueur more than the priests themselves. It was a matter for reflection to see them toss down one glass after another, smack their lips, and still replenish. They were quite free and easy in their talk, and occasionally somewhat broader than might have been looked for in sober ecclesiastics. The monk himself was jolly; yet he joined in only with innocent remarks. Upon his face was unmistakably the impression of a quiet mind and a pure heart: upon the faces of those he was serving as unmistakably there was an impression of the taint of the world.

By-and-by they all streamed out, and at the same time our dinner came in, and was placed on the long centre table. We had it quietly if not comfortably to our two selves, and for a short time the monk—we will call him by his name, Frère Gérasime—gave us his attention.

"You have come to see the monastery?" said he in his own tongue. "You have not chosen very fair weather." A remark we could not conscientiously contradict.

"Could we have foreseen it, mon frère," said H., "assuredly you would not have had the pleasure of entertaining us to-day. If we are not laid up after this, it will be grâce to your famous liqueur."

"Ah ha!" laughed Frère Gérasime, that rich, low, honest laugh it did one good to hear. "Every one likes our liqueur. I never met with a man who did not. Truly, it is a good medicine and a wholesome."

"To which you occasionally resort?" I asked.

"No, no," he gravely replied. "We are not permitted so much as o taste it. On the First of January, the fathers have one quart bottle given to them, which has to last them a whole year; they are allowed only one bottle a year; the brothers have none at all."

"That is hard lines. Have you many fathers in the Monastery?"

"Forty"

"And brothers?"

"Thirty. We are seventy in all. In this great building you would say there was room for at least seven hundred; but we are not more than seventy at present. Beyond this, we have about sixty servants attached to the convent: servants who have taken no vows upon them, and are at liberty to stay or go down into the world, just as they please."

Our dinner was of the simplest kind. There was nothing ailuring even to a hungry stomach; an epicure would have been beside himself. Soup-au-lait, *i.e.*, simply bread and milk served up in a tureen. At the same time was placed on the table a dish of fine trout, which I, with a passing thought to the splendid *forellen* of the Tyrol and Salzkammergut, hoped would be good. But it proved to be almost nauseous: hard, dry, and cooked in oil. The very smell was enough. I passed it over to H., who managed somehow or other to get through it. "Hobson's choice," said he, in answer probably to a gaze of admiration or astonishment at the empty dish. "He who goes in for delicacies here may starve."

Beyond this there was an omelette that was really good. They make them here with the yolk of the egg only: the whites are employed in making the liqueur: they get them from far and near, and still scarcely find sufficient for their purpose. A salad, cruets of oil and vinegar; a bottle of the red vin-du-pays, wine worse than vinegar itself; a few dried figs, raisins, and unshelled almonds; and, as a bonne bouche, a lump of garlic in a dish by itself, completed the menu.

"You will do well to stay the night with us," said Frère Gérasime, pointing to the snow that was falling in quick great flakes. "You would have a cold, dark drive back into the world."

"I don't know," said H., giving his head one of those wise twists that mean so much and say so little. The truth was he had a restless fit upon him, and so brought to bear upon the subject a few more of his prophetic visions concerning the weather. "I don't like the look of the sky," he went on. "With the wind in this quarter the storm may last some time. If we don't start back to-day, to-morrow we may be snowed up. When people are found with sufficient temerity to come up at this season of the year," he pointedly added, "it is a very common thing to be snowed in for a week together."

"A week's imprisonment, without even the distraction of hard labour!" I meekly rejoined, putting blind faith in his superior knowledge of the country and climate. "We should die of ennui. I very much want to spend a night here, and join in the midnight masses, but it won't do to risk a snowing-up."

H. shook his head decisively, ominously. There was no doubt about that.

"If you decide to stay," said Frère Gérasime, "you will be made welcome."

He left the refectory as he spoke, consigning us to the tender mercies of the servant who brought in the dinner: the same youth into whose hands we had first fallen. He was civil and obliging, and went about with a fixed smile on his face, and his mouth a little open. When we came to talk to him and ask him questions, he seemed almost a simpleton.

"Half-baked," said H., in vain trying to get intelligible answers to one or two trifling remarks. "It would never do for the monks to have sharp men about them. The secret of making the liqueur might ooze out. Other secrets too, if they have any."

As may be imagined our dinner was sooner ended than our appetite quenched. Shortly after, Frère Gérasime returned, and intimated his readiness to show us over the monastery. The round-table party followed him, and joined the visit of inspection. One of the priests immediately fastened himself on to me, and on further acquaintance proved by no means so bad a man as he might have been. There was a comic side to his character, and his remarks, as coming from a priest, were now and then surprising; but they were harmless enough: and after all, his partiality for the liqueur was hardly to be wondered at. Perhaps it was his worst weakness.

So we commenced our wanderings through passages and cloisters, into cells and out of them, which all seemed interminable. Everything was of stone; the flooring, the staircases, the cells appropriated to visitors. It is said they are able, on emergency, to make up twelve hundred beds, but this almost sounds like an exaggeration. The information was given to us at St. Laurent du Pont, and we neglected to prove its correctness at the convent.

The distinction between the fathers and the brothers is that the former are as a rule of superior rank and birth to the latter: they have brought in with them a certain sum of money: the latter can enter without any. The flannel gown in each case is white, but the cloaks of the fathers are also white, those of the brothers brown. There seems to be no other difference. The fathers, many of them, read and study (to what end?) in the retirement of their own cells; others spend their time in wood-carving and other species of work. The brothers superintend the servants, generally conduct the building, and occupy themselves in various trades. The fathers are never seen within the building; if one accidentally leaves his cell during a visit of inspection, and happens to meet strangers, he draws his cowl closely over his face, and hurries quickly through the cloisters. If by chance anyone is bold enough to address him, he is not permitted to reply.

"At what date was the monastery founded?" asked somebody as we went along.

"In the year 1084," replied Frère Gérasime; "by St. Bruno, who came of a rich family of Cologne. His bones do not repose here. We have not that honour and privilege."

"Is not this the mother convent?"

"Yes," he replied. "The other convents of the order are called simply Chartreuses: this is the *Grande* Chartreuse. Here only is the liqueur manufactured. But in point of beauty this building is perhaps the least attractive of all. Some of the others are magnificence itself."

"There are few traces of age here," I remarked, "although you call it the mother convent."

"It is not old," replied Frère Gérasime. "It has been burnt down many times. Very little of the present pile existed two hundred years ago. When St. Bruno first retired from the world and came up here, he lived in a cave, with five or six companions who joined him."

"What could have induced him to bury himself in such frightful solitude?"

"The same reasons, I suppose, which cause so many of us to follow his example," replied the frère, bending his body slightly as if in deprecation. "Tradition says that once, in walking through the streets of Paris, he met the funeral of an old friend. As the coffin passed him the lid burst open, and his friend sprang up, exclaiming, 'I am accused by the just judgment of God!' This had so great an effect upon him that he there and then determined to renounce the world. Here," continued Frère Gérasime, halting in the cloisters, "is our cemetery."

He threw open a door and let in a rush of cold air. The snow was lying on the ground, but not thickly. Here and there small hillocks were visible, and a few simple crosses without inscriptions. This was all.

"Who lie buried here?" asked my old priest.

"The monks," answered Frère Gérasime. "Fathers and brothers alike. In death there is no distinction. As each one dies and is buried, a small wooden cross is set over his grave: but it soon disappears, and we lie here amongst ourselves forgotten and unknown in death, just as in life we have long been forgotten and unknown by the world. Formerly the abbés and generals of the order had their graves distinguished by a stone cross, but these were all destroyed at the Revolution of 1789."

"That was a bad time for you?" said the priest.

"It simply ruined us," replied the monk, pathetically. "Before that period we were enormously rich. The convent belonged to us, the woods and forests surrounding us far and wide; the village of St. Laurent du Pont; much wealth. At the Revolution we lost all—everything. Our convent itself would have been sold, but nobody would buy it."

"And now?"

"Not even the convent belongs to us. We pay a small rent to Government—nominal it is true—for it and the surrounding territory. We are very poor compared with our former greatness."

"How do you now support yourselves?" asked the priest, who seemed much affected by the narrative.

"By cutting wood and selling it; by our cows, of which we have an immense herd; by our liqueur, which brings us in a considerable revenue."

"No wonder," cried the old priest, delicately feeling his waistcoat. "It is a wholesome cordial, my brother; a potent physic. I should even call it stomachic; particularly useful in cramps and spasms. This bleak climate is very favourable to cramps and spasms," he added,

THE PRINCIPAL CLOISTER.

urning to me with a merry twinkle in his eye. "My brother, you are doing a good work, there."

The monk smiled. I must again repeat that I never saw a face smile more completely. It was delightful to contemplate. He seemed very human in his thoughts and emotions: able to understand and sympathize with the human nature of his audience.

"How long have you been here?" I could not forbear asking.

"Thirty-two years," he answered.

Thirty-two years! He must have entered it when almost a boy, full of strength, comeliness, and intelligence. What could possibly have

induced him to forsake the world at that age? A question not to be asked on so slight an acquaintance.

"Have you never left the convent in these thirty-two years?"

"Never once. For thirty-two years I have been dead to the outside world. Thirty-two years ago I came up here, and here I am still. This," he said, changing the subject, "is our finest cloister. It is 660 feet long."

We were all at one end of it, and looked down a long vista. The accompanying sketch is very correctly drawn, though the door at the far end is more easily distinguished than it was in reality. This door opens into the cell of the father into whose charge the novices are consigned. Presently, as we were passing it the door opened, and the Father himself issued forth.

"Ah!" said Frère Gérasime, "a good opportunity. I will ask him if one of the fathers' cells is vacant and may be entered."

The monk stood in the doorway, his cowl close drawn. Frère Gérasime went up and spoke to him in a whisper. None could hear what passed. The monk did not reply in words, but gestures, shaking his head vigorously. As he did so the cowl fell back and betrayed a youngish man—not more, certainly, than thirty-five: tall, refined-looking, and handsome; pale with that death-like pallor that comes to each, and subdued, but evidently full of suppressed life and energy.

At present every cell was occupied, every monk in his cell. Silently he turned back and closed his door. Frère Gérasime rejoined us, and led the way through cloisters and passages, to the various chapels. The principal chapel was a long, plain hall, somewhat lofty. At the far end was the altar; on either side, down the whole length, were dark wooden seats, divided from each other precisely as the stalls in our own cathedrals. Here the monks day and night perform their masses. The other chapels were all much smaller, and are used only on occasion.

"This," said Frère Gérasime, turning into a large hall or room, opening into another of similar size, "is the refectory where we all dine together on Sundays and Saints' days. At all other times each monk dines alone in his own cell. But though we dine together on Sundays, we are not allowed to speak to each other. Perfect silence reigns. The monks have the choice of two simple dishes, besides bread and wine. Nothing else. Meat and fowl come not within our doors. We never give them even to visitors, though we permit them to bring meat for themselves if they cannot do without it. This room is the refectory of the fathers; that, yonder, of the brothers."

Down the tables on each side were ranged plates and common pewter jugs. At the end of the further room, through the archway, might be seen a large crucifix suspended against the wall.

"Are the monks never allowed to go out?" I asked.

"Yes," answered Frère Gérasime; "once a week they take a walk

up into the mountains together, and this is called le spaciment. They are then absolved from their vow of silence, and are even commanded to converse with each other."

Proceeding upstairs, we passed through more interminable corridors and into cells set apart for visitors. These cells were plain, comfortless and terribly cold. A small wooden bedstead, the bedding good; a common deal chair and table, the latter holding a small jug and basin; and that was all.

The library was a large room, containing many well-assorted books. It formerly possessed also many ancient, curious, and valuable manuscripts, but at the Revolution they were taken to Grenoble and have never since been returned. The monks have access to the library, and are allowed to take books into their cells, the reading of which forms one of their occupations. They have eight hours of prayer and service; eight hours of work and study; eight hours of sleep.

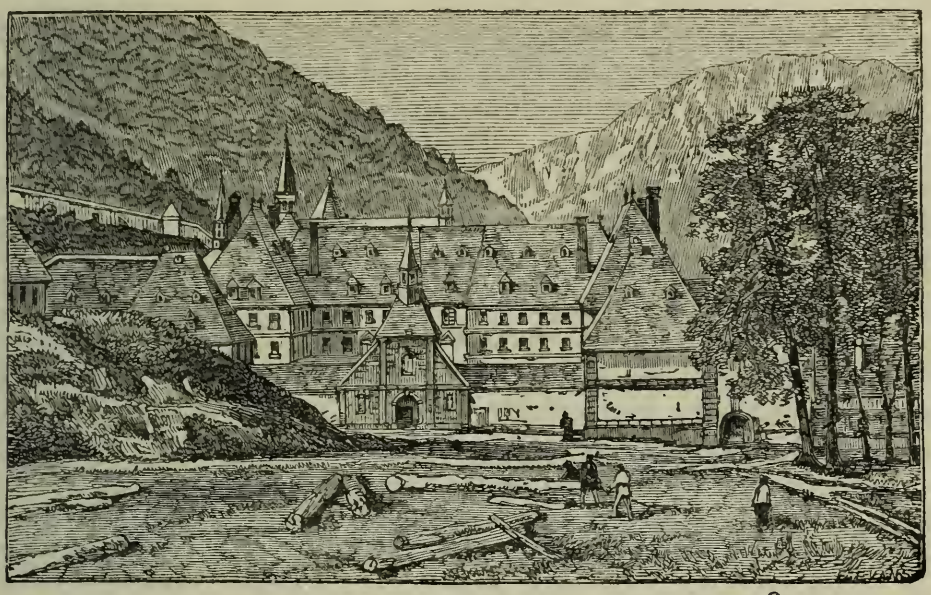
Each father has three small cells and a garden to himself. Each garden is attached to its own cell, and is entered through a window or door in the cell, so that the occupant of the cell alone has access to it. The cells are lined with plain deal wainscoting, each containing a crucifix and skull; the former for their devotions, the latter to keep them in perpetual remembrance of death, and assist them in the contemplation thereof; the one an emblem of death itself, the other of Immortality and the Life to come. Every cell is furnished with a small plain table, a bed and a chair: and besides this, a working bench and tools. Some, as has been already observed, spend all their time in reading and study; some in carving; some in carpentering; all do something: idleness is not allowed for a moment. But what a strange, sad existence to lead year after year!

The weather being unpropitious, the snow so deep upon the ground, it was impossible to go into the surrounding mountains. So about five o'clock we took leave of the convent and the good monk, Frère Gérasime. H. and I seemed to have made inroads upon his heart, for at the moment of starting he pressed upon us, in addition to a farewell glass, a bottle of the liqueur, "in case," as he observed, "we should be taken ill from cold on the road." He must surely have had ringing in his remembrance, the words of the old priest!

Our gratitude to our driver was not small when we found that by dint of superhuman efforts, he had managed to bring up his crazy vehicle to the lower gates of the monastery; a patient perseverance which justly entitled him to an extra pourboire at the end of the journey. For some distance it was more like sledging than driving, as we slipped over the snow in our downward progress. Once or twice we narrowly escaped the edge of the precipice, and a momentary glimpse of the bottom was a sight far more terrifying than a forest phantom, as a rough jolt shot the old vehicle into the right track again.

At length we were safely landed at St. Laurent du Pont. The omnibus had started back for Grenoble, and our best way of returning was to hire a carriage to take us to Voiron, and thence to Grenoble by train. In less than half an hour a comfortable conveyance was at our service, and we were soon on the road again.

The drive was far more striking and picturesque and shorter than the drive from Grenoble. Our coachman—the son of the proprietor of the inn, who had taken the box because there was no one else at liberty—was a capital whip, and drove rapidly and easily down the roads, some of which were steep. Twilight was falling as we neared the end, wrapping the mountains in hushed silence. At length we clattered through the street of Voiron, a well-to-do, flourishing town,



PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE.

and stopped at the Grand Hotel. Here H. was well known, and officiously greeted; and he declared that he would not again quit its hospitable walls until the inner life had received fresh food and sustenance.

A declaration which lost us the last train to Grenoble, and detained us at Voiron the whole night. The next morning we took an early train, and reached our destination in less than an hour's time.

It so happened that we paid a second visit to the Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, and this time we decided to stay the night there. The appointed day was the Thursday before Good Friday. The weather was glorious; the sky blue and bright; the sun hot and glowing; the trees were green, the birds sang; the orchards were laden with blossoms pink and white; the hill-sides were luxuriant and luxuriating in their spring garments. Ten days had made no slight change in the face of nature: ten days of variable weather, fickle as a coquette;

blowing now hot, now cold; one day summer skies and atmosphere; next, fires, and frosts, and half a dozen great coats.

Disinclined for a second edition of the early omnibus, and a long dreary day at the convent, we chartered a carriage and pair on our own account and left Grenoble at two o'clock this bright splendid afternoon. The Fates might have been thought propitious. But as we neared St. Laurent du Pont, the skies became overcast with black, threatening clouds; the wind suddenly rose and blew with the force of a hurricane, swaying the trees on the mountain tops from side to side, rushing through them with a wail that ended in a roar. At last we reached St. Laurent in a fury of the elements.

"Too fierce to last," said H., hopefully. "Nevertheless this is awful luck."

We entered the salle-à-manger of the hotel, where they stirred up the wood fire into a blaze, and hoped we had the intention of staying the night with them. H. went out to speak to the proprietor about a conveyance up to the Monastery. The horses that perform the journey to St. Laurent from Grenoble are unable to climb the long steep gorge. The carriage is also supposed to be too smart and delicately fashioned to go beyond the village.

In a few minutes H. came back.

"A pretty go!" he exclaimed, with a laugh. "We are booked here for the night, after all. They have neither horses nor carriage of any sort in the village. Not a single miserable pair of cattle, the landlord asserts. Nor will there be any until the morning."

"Is it so!" I cried, astonished at the ease with which H. resigned himself to this untoward fate. "Must we remain prisoners here after so much trouble and hardship? Give up the night with the monks and their midnight masses? Not without a struggle."

I went out in search of the landlord, who stood at his own door.

"No horses for the Grande Chartreuse?" said I.

"Mais enfin, m'sieu, not one," returned he, shrugging his shoulders, and twisting his whole body into contortions, to give extra force to his words. "Not a single miserable bête from one end of the village to the other. Messieurs must remain here all night. To-morrow we shall have plenty of cattle."

"Very well," I said, quietly. "Monsieur will please pay attention. It will not suit us to remain here all night. Either you must find us a pair of horses within ten minutes, or we return immediately to Grenoble with those that brought us here."

In ten minutes' time a pair of small, strong horses came trotting round to the hotel, and we continued the journey in our own carriage; the landlord protesting that the horses would never reach the Monastery, and the carriage would never pass through the tunnels.

The rain, happily, had ceased; the snow lay less deep upon the

ground. We reached the convent, without let or hindrance, soon after seven in the evening. Frère Gérasime, surprised and overjoyed to see us again so soon, shook hands heartily.

"So you have come to spend Good Friday, with us!" he cried, taking this for granted. "That is right, and well done. I am very glad to see you. Jean, quick! some chartreuse. How cold you must be—and hungry! You will take some dinner?"

"By all means," replied H. "Your mountain air would breed a famine."

In a short time they brought us in just such a repast as has been already given in detail; except that the soup instead of being of bread and milk (soup-au-lait), was of bread and hot water—it seemed composed of little if anything else. Here, of course, where flesh and fowl are unknown, it cannot be made with anything but vegetables—at least I suppose not, though I have never qualified for cooking; but even the vegetables to-night seemed wanting.

I had never seen H.—who had taken little breakfast and no lunch—so ravenous. When I came to ponder over matters, I believed that herein lay the secret of his quiet acquiescence to the assertions of the St. Laurent landlord concerning the non-existence of "a single pair of miserable cattle." At least—so H. must have soliloquised—he should be in for a good dinner comfortably put before him; a matter of more consequence to a hungry man, not utterly indifferent to the good things of this world, than sleeping a night in a monastery, or assisting at all the midnight masses that ever were chanted. For my own part, having made up my mind, I would sooner have trudged the whole way to the convent than abandon the idea. Though I could quite conceive death on the road as the result.

A group of four or five men were seated round the stove when we entered. They had possibly walked up, for as soon as our dinner appeared three of them retired to their cells, with previous injunctions to the servants to wake them at midnight for the matins—the midnight masses.

"You, too, would like to be present at the matins?" said Frère Gérasime, appealing to us.

"Without fail," I answered. "But who will wake us?"

"I," said he. "I will undertake to do it myself. I will not trust to the servants. At a quarter before midnight I will come to you. Jean," turning to the man, "cells 20 and 21 for these gentlemen. And now," he added, "I will leave you to your repast. I must go about my own business. We have service in the chapel, and I have my own devotions in my cell."

He left the refectory, and we turned to the table, where dinner was waiting. H., I have said, was ravenous; luckily I was the very reverse, and could take nothing. So H. had the delicacies to himself, and

made short work of them; save and except the inevitable lump of garlic.

"Now, Jean," said H. to the garçon—our old friend with the fixed smile—"a glass of chartreuse to assist digestion. Let it be the green liqueur. You wouldn't believe it," turning to me, "but I have never yet tasted the green. I don't know how it is; no matter where you go, it is always the yellow they bring you—the green never. It is stronger than the yellow; and I conclude more choice."

The green was accordingly poured out, and having tasted it, we simultaneously made a face at each other; just as a monkey before a glass makes a face at his own reflection and sees it repeated. It was stronger than we had bargained for, thin, and not at all palatable. This green chartreuse is really medicinal; given only in cases of illness, such as dyspepsia, and many other complaints; and then sometimes on sugar, sometimes diluted with water. H. swallowed his by dint of firmness, I with the help of the said water.

"No more of that for me," said H. "Jean, quick, two glasses of yellow to take away the taste of the green."

"Oui, oui, m'sieu, as much as you will," replied Jean, shuffling up to the cupboard, his fixed smile relaxing if possible a hair's breadth.

The fire was dying out; it was nearly nine o'clock, when visitors are supposed to retire to their cells. Jean began to look heavy about the eyelids; his grin gained a more idiotic expression. Taking pity upon him, we bade him lead the way to our cells.

They were on the first floor, adjoining each other, looked on to the principal court yard, and will be found in the drawing of the chief entrance—to be precise—the second and third windows to the reader's right hand. Both were furnished exactly alike, without any regard to comfort.

"How are we supposed to shave?" I wondered, looking in vain for a glass.

"Probably, we are not supposed to shave at all," said H., with a laugh. "I, for one, mean to be off to-morrow morning by half past seven, and have ordered the coachman to be in readiness. A little of this rude life goes a long way with me. I would rather go in for civilization. We can defer the demands of civilization—such as shaving, for instance—until we get back to St. Laurent and the world. Now I'm going to turn in until midnight. Of course you'll do the same. Good-night."

But for two reasons I did not follow his example. In the first place, I thought the sheets felt damp. What could you expect in a monastery, where there were no women to look after these things? What could monks know about airing linen? Secondly, I was afraid Frère Gérasime, with the best intentions in the world, might forget us, or oversleep himself, and I should miss the midnight mass. So, having brought a book with me, I sat down to read.

It was frightfully, terribly cold. I have never felt anything like it. Hands and feet were numbed; the very candle burnt red and blue. Gradually I found I was turning over pages, and reading things that were not in the book; the letters grew red and began to dance a demon dance on the leaves; then they started into life and mocked and gibed at one another and at me: then all consciousness fled, and I slept.

Suddenly, at a quarter before midnight, I was brought back to life by a voice speaking to me in hushed, hurried tones. I was sitting bolt upright in my chair, book in hand, the candle before me flaring away. The door was half-open; a face pale as a death's head was looking in upon me; the large, dark eyes glistened; the cowl was in part thrown back. In the first moment of awaking it seemed literally and verily that I gazed on the face of one returned from the grave. I looked up, lost and bewildered. It was Frère Gérasime. He had not forgotten his promise.

"Midnight will soon strike," he said, in hushed tones, that seemed almost to hiss through the dead silence. "The matins will begin. The monks are leaving their cells for the chapel. Follow me."

I was up in an instant, though with limbs so petrified that for a few moments I stood rooted to the spot. When the power to move came back, the monk had disappeared, how or where I knew not. The long dark corridors were in thick darkness I could not penetrate. I listened for his footsteps, but the silence of death reigned in this living tomb.

I hastened towards the cloisters. One by one the monks were coming out of their cells, each carrying a lantern, each enveloped in cloak and cowl. One by one, noiselessly as phantoms, they flitted through the long, melancholy cloisters, looking like spirits haunting the region of another world.

As the phantom-procession glided away, I returned to my cell for the candle, and at the chapel door blew it out and put it upon a stone ledge that seemed conveniently placed there for such purposes. Instead of that, hand and candlestick plunged into a cavern of holy water! I transferred it to the ground, and entered the chapel.

From a height I looked down upon two long rows of monks. The place was in semi-darkness, lighted only by the lanterns, which chiefly threw light upon their books. The altar could not be distinguished in the gloom.

As a clock tolled out the hour of midnight—more than usually solemn in such a place and amidst such a scene—the monks commenced their mass, and for two hours they kept up the same monotonous gregorian chant they have used for nearly a thousand years. At intervals a monk—always one of the fathers—would glide noiselessly down the chapel, take his place at the lectern, chant from the book for about ten minutes, and then glide back to his place, to give way to another. Many of the voices were clear, musical, and powerful.

There was something inexpressibly solemn and weird, in listening to these monks at this witching hour; in realizing that night after night, century after century, when the world is supposed, for the most part, to be sunk in sleep: reposing from the work of the old day, and gaining strength for the labours of the new: these men, who have retired from that world in the plenitude of strength and vigour, are living such a marvellous, incomprehensible life to themselves; spending a part of their nights in devotion; for two whole hours in the coldest, darkest, deepest portion, chanting their matins; never absent from the scene unless illness keeps them away.

When I had been there about a quarter of an hour, finding H. did not appear, I, as well as I could, threaded my way in the darkness through the long passages. Trying one door after the other, and finding it locked and deserted, never man felt more lost than I; yielding the impression of one of those terrible dreams which visit us when ill or unstrung, and haunt us for ever after. At last I found my way to his cell. He was stretched on the bed, asleep. "H.," said I, stirring him up as roughly as one dare touch a sleeping man, "you are losing the best part of the whole thing. The monks have been in chapel no end of a time. Get up."

He was bewildered, and reluctant to turn out; but he managed to do it, and followed me to the chapel. Five minutes of nodding to and fro, and he got up again. "I can't stand it any longer," said he. "I have had enough of this." And he went back to bed. How he found his way he never knew, and I was never able to discover.

I waited on until towards two o'clock, and then was so petrified with cold, so overpowered with sleepiness; induced probably by the influence of the cold and snow; that without waiting to see the monks flit back to their graves, as they had flitted from them, I returned to my cell. This time, wrapping myself in a travelling rug, I threw myself on the bed and tried to sleep. For a long time the cold would not let me. Every now and then, small avalanches of snow would fall from the roof into the yard below, with a dull thud, rousing the heavy eyelids, and dispersing slumber. At length, as a grey dawn was creeping over sky and snow and mountain tops, with a shiver in its wake, I fell into a doze, from which, all too soon I was unmercifully aroused by H.

"Time's up," said he. "I ordered the carriage at half past seven. Jump out."

I had only to jump out of the rug, but it was hard work. I was cold, and stiff, and miserable. The events of the past night seemed but a dream. "Were we in the chapel at the midnight mass?" I asked. "Or have I imagined it all?" And then, without waiting a reply, I went off to the chapel door.

Yes; there was the candlestick, sure enough, just where I had left it; there, just above, was the cavern of holy water into which I had plunged

my hand. I entered the chapel, and looked around, and for a moment endeavoured to realize the scene of the past night. It was as if I had been assisting at a meeting of the dead. The place was now deserted and I left it with a strange, indescribable sensation.

H. was ready to start when I got back. Frère Gérasime was not to be seen at that early hour; he was occupied in his own cell; and we had to leave without bidding him farewell. But not before we had swallowed a glass or two of chartreuse, to drive out the past cold, and keep away that still to be encountered. The carriage was ready; we took a last look around; on the building, the snow, the trees, the mountains; which we should not see matched down in the world. But we were not sorry to find ourselves by-and-by at St. Laurent, with a crackling fire blazing in its salle-à-manger; with, as H. expressed it, signs of civilization and comfort around, and a chance of breakfast.

In a corner of the fire-place sat a man who was that day going up to the Grande Chartreuse, never, he said, to come down again. Going up, not to take vows upon him, but as a kind of boarder. He was past the middle age, and his mind seemed a little shaken. He had been tolerably successful in life, but had lost all his relatives and friends with the exception of one brother who was very well-to-do in the world and cared nothing about him. So he had made up his mind to end his days peaceably in the monastery. He had agreed to pay them a small yearly sum for his board, and to leave them all he possessed at his death. But I perceived that his resolve was considerably shaken when I assured him the cooking was bad. "Indeed," said he. "I had no idea of that. I always heard it was very good, and that you lived better there than in any other convent."

As soon as we had breakfasted we were anxious to be off. The morning was bright and pleasant, the sky clear, the sun warm and glowing: all this might change. It did not, nevertheless; and the drive back to Grenoble was in proportion delightful.

"Never again," said I to M., after she had greeted the wanderers, "will I visit the Grande Chartreuse in winter—at any rate to pass the night there. In summer as often as you please. We have escaped this time alive; let us hope, unharmed; Frère Gérasime is a character worth knowing: the monastery is curious; the liqueur delicious, though you always affect to despise it: but all these things would scarcely have compensated us had we been frozen to death."

"At least," she replied, laughing, "let us be thankful that you have returned safely. Baby has been in despair without you. To lose husband and brother at one go, would have been too awful a calamity. But I see you have not shaved this morning. You will find hot water in your dressing-room."

C. W. W.

# ADAM GRAINGER.

*By the Author of* "EAST LYNNE."

(*Reprinted.*)

## I.

THE congregation was pouring out of a fashionable episcopal chapel at the west-end of London; many of them; for it was the height of the season, and the chapel was popular. Nearly all the carriages drove rapidly off with their freights; about half a dozen only remained, waiting for those who stayed to the after-service. It had become a recent custom with the preacher, Dr. Channing, to hold it every Sunday. A regal-looking, stately girl appeared nearly last, and entered one of the carriages. The footman closed the door after her, but he did not ascend to his place, nor did the carriage drive off. It was Miss Channing, and she took her seat there to wait for her father.

Following her out almost immediately, came a tall, gentlemanly, but young man, whose piercing hazel eyes were pleasant to look upon. He advanced to the carriage door, and shook hands with her.

"You are not staying to-day, Margaret!"

"I felt too ill to stay," was Miss Channing's answer, whilst a rosy blush, which had stolen to her face at sound of his voice, began rapidly to fade. "I shall soon be better, now I am in the air."

"Margaret ——" He looked round, as he spoke the word, to make sure that the servants were not within hearing: and that conspicuous crimson came mixing with the paleness of her face again. "Margaret, don't you think we are going on in a very unsatisfactory way? I do."

"I think," she said, "that you ought to remember the place we have just quitted, and choose serious subjects to converse upon."

An amused expression shone in his handsome eyes. "If this is not a serious subject, Margaret, I should like to know what is."

"Oh, but I mean—another sort of seriousness. You know what I mean. Adam, I shall never make you religious."

"Yes, you shall, Margaret: when you have the right to make me what you please."

"How did you like papa's sermon to-day?" she inquired, hastily.

"Very much, of course."

"That portion of it about David and Saul?"

"I did not notice that," he was obliged to confess. "I do believe, Margaret, I was thinking more of you than of the sermon."

"Oh, Adam! that is so bad a habit,——letting the thoughts wander in church! But it may be overcome."

"Yes, yes: I mean to overcome it, and everything else that you disapprove. Margaret, I shall speak to Dr. Channing."

She looked startled. "If you do, I will never speak to you again. We must wait. Papa will not part with me."

"That, Margaret, is nothing more than an illusion. Your father, of all men, is not one to fly in the face of scriptural commands. It would be—what's that word clergymen so dread? Simony?"

"How very ridiculous you are this morning! Simony!"

"Sacrilege, then. He knows it is written that a man and wife are to leave father and mother, and cleave to each other. Does he want you to stay with him until you are forty?"

"I cannot talk about it now. You had better say farewell, Adam."

He shook hands, as a preliminary to departure; but, lover-like, lingered on. Lingered until Dr. Channing appeared. A short, fair, gentlemanly-looking divine: in face very unlike his daughter.

"Ah, Mr. Grainger, how d'ye do? I saw you in your place as usual. Hope Mrs. Grainger's quite well. It is too far for her to come. And a long way for you, every Sunday morning. I am truly happy to find a young man so earnest and regular in his attendance where his mind can receive the benefit of sound doctrine."

An ingenuous flush dyed Mr. Grainger's countenance. But he was unable to reject the compliment. He could not tell the self-satisfied Doctor that the attraction lay neither in the church nor the orthodox sermons, but in the pretty face of the preacher's daughter.

It was only within a year that Dr. Channing had preached in London, drawing fashion to his fashionable chapel. Previous to that, his ministry had lain in the country, as rector of Ashton-cum-Creepham—a profitable living that, but nothing to the income he was gaining now. His only child, Margaret, had formed a school friendship with Isabel Grainger, more deep and lasting than school friendships generally are. Highly respectable people were the Graingers; Mr. Grainger, the father, holding a valuable appointment in a wealthy metropolitan insurance-office. They lived in the neighbourhood of London, in rather more style than the Channings—than the Channings did, then, at Ashton Rectory—and the families, through the young ladies, became intimate. It was thus that Miss Channing met with Isabel's only brother, Adam. He was in the office with his father, sufficiently high-spirited and handsome for any girl to fall in love with—though, as Isabel used to say, he was remarkably fond of having his own way. Some two years after she had left school, a lingering illness attacked Isabel Grainger. The symptoms, trifling at first, grew serious; from serious they became hopeless. During the progress of this illness, the Channings removed to London, Dr. Channing having given up his rectory for a West-end chapel. Margaret, who had recently lost her mother, was allowed to spend a good portion of time with her

friend; and it was round Isabel's death-bed that the liking which had arisen between Margaret and Adam grew into love. Since then, other changes had taken place. Mr. Grainger had died; Adam had succeeded to his post in the insurance-office, and to a salary of eight hundred a year. Mr. Grainger had received considerably more; as Adam no doubt would receive in time. But he thought he could marry very well upon this. But Dr. and Miss Channing had not become denizens of town, and of Eaton-place, for nothing. They were grand people now, living amongst the grand; and they had, perhaps insensibly, acquired grand ideas.

Miss Channing went out the following morning, and did not reach home till luncheon time. It was waiting in the dining-room. She sat down to begin. Her father was frequently not in at that meal; it was his desire that he should never be waited for. Something that she wanted was not on the table, and she rang for it.

"Papa is out, I suppose?" she carelessly observed to the man.

"No, miss, the Doctor is in his study. Mr. Grainger is with him."

Mr. Grainger! All Margaret's appetite left her on the instant. She laid down her knife and fork, and rose in agitation. "To bring matters to an issue so very soon!" was her resentful thought.

A few minutes, and Margaret heard him leave the house. Her father came into the dining-room. Dr. Channing was a passionless man, rarely giving way to emotion of any kind, save in the pulpit. He was apt to grow excited then, but in ordinary life his exterior was becomingly calm. He sat down, took some fowl on his plate, and requested his daughter to cut him a slice of ham.

She proceeded to do so, her heart beating violently, and scarcely conscious what she was about.

"Margaret! Are you expecting visitors?"

"No, papa. Why?"

"You are cutting enough ham for half a dozen people. Do you wish me to eat all that?"

She blushed violently at the mistake she had made, and pushed the superfluous slices out of sight underneath the joint. She then rose and stood at the window, looking out, but seeing nothing. Dr. Channing eat on placidly until he had finished.

The suspense was choking her. If Adam Grainger had been asking for her, she must either refuse or accept him: if the latter, why, all her glowing dreams of ambition would fly away: if the former, life would become a blank she scarcely dared contemplate. It seemed that her father was not going to speak. He had taken up a book. Margaret was a straightforward girl: she liked to know the worst of things: it was better to bear than uncertainty.

"Papa—was not that Mr. Grainger who went out?"

"It was. Mr. Grainger is not the only visitor I have had this morning," added Dr. Channing. "Colonel Hoare has been here."

More perplexity for Margaret. Colonel the Honourable Gregory Hoare was the father of Captain Hoare; and Captain Hoare was the most inveterate admirer she had, next to Mr. Grainger. A suspicion had more than once crossed Margaret's mind that he was the one for whom she should sometime discard Adam Grainger.

"Come, Margaret, it is of no use beating about the bush," said Dr. Channing. "Did you know of these visits? Did you send Mr. Grainger to me with a demand that I should allow you to become his wife."

"No," said Margaret, rather faintly.

"I thought so. I informed him that he must be labouring under a mistake. He said there was an attachment between you; that it had existed some time."

"Oh, papa!" stammered the confused girl. "Gentlemen do assert strange things!"

"The very remark I made to him—that it was the strangest piece of rigmarole I ever heard. He persisted in it."

"How did it end? what was the result? she inquired, still gazing from the window. "I suppose you refused him, papa?"

"There was nothing else I would do. You don't want to marry a tradesman, I conclude. And really those insurance-office people are little better than tradesmen," added the reverend divine. "Commercial, at any rate."

Margaret's cheek burnt, and Margaret's heart rebelled; and she winced, for *his* sake, at those slighting words, as she would have winced at an insult to herself. "Mr. Grainger is a gentleman, papa. Did you quarrel?" she added, drawing a deep breath.

"What did you say? Quarrel? I never quarrel with any one. I was especially civil to the young man. But I suggested to him that his visits here had better cease, as they would not be pleasant, after so singular a misapprehension."

A spasm of pain crossed Margaret's features. Dr. Channing saw it.

"Margaret! Do you regret my dismissal of this young man?"

"No, no, papa," she replied, rousing herself. "It is best as it is."

"Colonel Hoare also called. The first time he has done me the honour, although they attend my chapel. If ever there was a proud family, it is that of the Hoares. However—I have nothing to say against becoming pride. Colonel Hoare believes that his son and Miss Channing look on each other with a favourable eye. Is it so, Margaret?"

"Did he—for Captain Hoare—make me an offer of marriage?" rejoined Margaret, in a low tone, evading the question.

"It was coming to it, as I believe, when that young Grainger interrupted us: Spilson must needs usher him into the same room! Up

jumped the colonel, and said he would call in later. I should like Captain Hoare to be my son-in-law, Margaret: the mother, Lady Sophia, looks a charming woman. *That* will be a desirable connection if you like!"

So Margaret thought. Vain ambition rose in her heart, over-shadowing, for the moment, all unpleasant regrets.

"Colonel Hoare will be here again at half-past three. The conference is to relate to money and settlements. It would be proper, he said, for us to agree upon that score before matters went on further."

"Papa, had Mr. Grainger been in the position of Captain Hoare, possessing wealth and family, would you have objected to him?"

"No. I like the young man exceedingly."

Friends called to take Miss Channing for a drive. It was late when she returned: her father had gone out to dine with a brother clergyman. She was anxious to know what arrangements had been concluded with Colonel Hoare. She pictured herself the future bride of his distinguished son, she held her head an inch higher as she dwelt on it, and she kept repeating to herself that she *would* like him, she *would* forget Adam Grainger.

Easier said than done, Miss Channing.

She dined alone, and then went up to dress, for she was engaged to an evening party, where she would be joined by her father. Captain Hoare was to be there too—oh! let her look her best. And she did so. Entering the dining-room when she descended, Mr. Grainger confronted her. She quite started back. Though her heart, true to itself, beat with pleasure, her conscience dreaded the interview; and could he or she have vanished into air, after the fashion of an apparition, it had been welcome to Margaret.

"Margaret," he exclaimed, seizing her hand, "I have waited here a whole half hour; it has seemed to me like a day."

"I did not expect you," she faltered.

"You must have expected me," was the impatient rejoinder. "Margaret! the answer your father gave me was not *your* answer!"

"How can I go against my father?"

"The question was not mooted of whether I should call you wife," he continued, more and more impetuously, "we did not get so far; but he said there was no attachment between us—said it, as I understood, from you. What does that mean?"

"Not from me," she replied, in a timid tone; "I had not then spoken with him. But, Adam, my father says that what has been between us must be so no longer."

"Do you dare to tell me to my face that our long love is wasted? A thing to be forgotten from henceforth—thrown away as worthless?"

"You terrify me," she said, bursting into tears.

"Margaret, my love," he whispered, changing his angry tone for one

of sweet tenderness, "'terrify' is a strange word for you to use to me. Perhaps we are mistaking each other. Will you give me leave to ask for you of your father?"

She hesitated. Her heart told her that her life's happiness was bound up in him: should she wilfully throw it away for ever? A conviction lay within her, that if *she* wished to marry Adam Grainger, her father would not hold out against it: for she was very dear to him. But, in their turn, arose other visions: of the pomp and pride of the world, of the lust and luxury of high life: all very attractive vanities, and in which she would revel to the full, should she become the envied daughter-in-law of the Honourable Colonel and Lady Sophia Hoare. Her resolve was taken, and she steeled her heart to him who stood there.

"Margaret," he panted, "what is it that has come between us? To you I will not repeat what Dr. Channing said."

"Adam—I fear—there is no help for it. We must part."

He folded his arms and looked at her. "Say that again."

"I am very sorry, Adam. I shall always think of you with regret. I hope ——"

"Stay, Margaret! Do not let us bandy compliments in a moment like this. Give me an unvarnished answer. Is it your wish that we should part, and become as strangers?"

"The wish is urged by necessity," she murmured: "my father's will. He says—he does say, Adam—that I must marry in a higher sphere."

"We will not speak now of your father's will. Is it your will that I ask for you?"

"No," she was obliged to reply; "it is too late."

"Are you promised to another?"

A desperate resolution came over her—that she would tell him the truth. It would serve to put an end to this scene, which was becoming too painful. "I believe I am," she said, scarcely above a whisper

A sudden paleness overspread his heated face, and he drew his hand across his brow. Heavy drops of emotion had gathered there.

"God forgive you!" he breathed. "As true as that you are a false woman, Margaret Channing, you will live to repent of this."

"I hope that—after awhile—you will forgive me. I hope when our feelings—yes, *ours*—have softened down, that we shall renew our friendship. Why should we not? It would be valuable to have you for a friend through life."

"Who is it?" he rejoined, with unnatural calmness.

"Captain Hoare. But, oh, Adam!" she added, with a burst of irrepressible feeling that ought to have been kept in, and she laid her hand upon his arm, as in the days of their affection, "do not think I love him! In one sense I am not false to you, for I can never love

him, or any one as I have loved you. The marriage is suitable, and I have acceded to it from worldly motives. It will take me years—it will—even of my married life—to forget you. Give me your forgiveness now, before we part."

For answer, Mr. Grainger shook her hand from his arm, and passed out at the door.

She sank down on a chair and gave vent to a passionate burst of tears: she thought her heart was breaking. When she became calmer, she dragged herself out to the carriage.

With the lighted rooms, the music, and the gay crowd she was soon mixing in, Margaret's spirits returned. "I *will* strive—I will thrust regret and care from me," she murmured; "the anguish will not be so great if I make a resolute effort against it. How late Captain Hoare is!"

Captain Hoare dined that day with some young men at their club, and only went home afterwards to dress. His father and mother were sitting alone; the colonel over his wine.

"What's the news?" cried the captain, in a listless sort of manner, as if not very much caring whether he received an answer or not. Consequently he was scarcely prepared for the sharp way in which his mother took him up.

"The news is this, sir: that you ought to have inquired further, before despatching your father on a fool's errand. Twice he went!"

"A fool's errand!" echoed the gallant captain.

"A fruitless one," interposed the colonel. "We were against the match, Edward, as you know, for the Channings are not people of family ——"

"It was derogatory even to think of it," interrupted Lady Sophia. "I strove to impress that upon you, colonel, before you went."

"My dear—Edward was so bent upon it: and I thought there might be mitigating circumstances. If the girl had had twenty or thirty thousand pounds told down with her, one might have put up with it. However, all's well that ends well. Channing refuses to give her any money until his death, so the matter is at an end."

"Why does he refuse?" asked the captain, with a very blank look.

"He told me he should give her none before he died, and that what there would be for her then, the precise amount, he really could not state. And he proceeded to ask me, in a tone of resentment, if I had come there to make a *barter* for his daughter."

"I hope this will cure you of looking for a wife in an inferior family, son Edward," observed Lady Sophia. "Who are these Channings? Nobody. He was nothing but a country parson: it is only since he got this chapel that even their name has been heard of."

"But Miss Channing will surely have money, sir," remonstrated Captain Hoare, passing over his mother's remarks without comment.

"I don't know," was Colonel Hoare's reply. "The Doctor's words sounded to me anything but satisfactory; shuffling, in fact. You cannot marry her upon the uncertainty. I should never give my consent."

"Well—if there's no help for it. I don't feel inclined to marry the best girl that ever stepped, unless she can bring grist to the mill. But she was a deuced nice girl," he added to himself, "and I took it for granted the old parson would give her a pile of gold."

So, little wonder Captain Hoare was late. When he entered, Miss Channing was waltzing in exuberant spirits—so far as anything appeared to the contrary. He came up to her when she was free. She was standing in the recess of the bow window, which opened upon a small terrace filled with exotics. At the moment no one was there but herself. Captain Hoare took her hand.

"I thought you told me you should be here early?" she remarked.

"I did mean to be. But—as things have turned out—I doubted whether I ought to appear at all, and lost time deliberating. Then an irresistible impulse seized me to come and bid you a last farewell."

Had he spoken in Hebrew, his words could not have been much less intelligible to Miss Channing. "Bid me farewell!" she repeated. "I do not understand. Is your regiment ordered abroad?"

Neither did Captain Hoare understand just then. "Perhaps you have not seen Dr. Channing?" he exclaimed, after a pause, the idea occurring to him.

"I have not seen papa since the middle of the day."

"You are not ignorant, dear Miss Channing, that I had set my heart and hopes upon you," he rejoined, gently retaining her hand, and lowering his voice to a whisper. "I do not think you could have mistaken my sentiments, although they were only implied."

Her blushing cheek and downcast eye told him that she had not.

"And now to have these delightful hopes knocked on the head by two crabbed old fathers is almost more than mortal ought to stand. I can only hope you will not feel it as I do."

A cold shiver of dismay ran through the heart of Margaret Channing. "I am not quite sure what it is you mean," she faltered.

"What a blessing if there were no such thing as money in the world! My father called on Dr. Channing this afternoon to open negotiations, and the two must get differing about the base-metal part of the transaction. So he came home, laid his embargo on me, and ordered me to consign you to the regions of forgetfulness. You will, no doubt, receive the same command, as to me, from Dr. Channing. The unnaturally hard stuff that fathers are made of!"

She could not entirely prevent the expression of her wounded feelings

struggling to her face. Captain Hoare saw its paleness, and spoke with more feeling than he had hitherto displayed.

"Dear Miss Channing, I am deeply sorry for this termination to our valued friendship. I should have been proud and happy to call you my wife, and that I may not do so is, believe me, no fault of mine. We may not act against circumstances, but I shall regret this day to the last hour of my life. And now I will say farewell: it is painful to me to linger here, as it must be painful to you."

He wrung her hand, and quitted the rooms; and Margaret Channing's spirit sank within her. Confused visions of the true heart she had thrown away *for nothing* rose before her in bitter mockery. One came up and claimed her for the dance: she did not know what she answered, save that it was an abrupt refusal. She sank down in a sort of apathy, and presently saw her father.

"I suppose you are not ready to go home, Margaret?"

"Oh yes, I am, papa. My head aches with the heat, as it did yesterday in church. I shall be glad to go."

"Then, say good-night to Mrs. Goldingham, and come."

"Thankfully," she muttered to herself. "Anything to be alone."

Until they were nearly at home Dr. Channing was silent, leaning back in his corner of the carriage. The door was in sight when he raised himself to speak.

"A pretty sort of a high and mighty fellow that Colonel Hoare is! Do you know what he wanted?"

"No," was Margaret's answer.

"Wanted me to undertake to give you twenty thousand pounds down on your wedding-day, condescendingly intimating that it might be settled upon you. I told him I should not do it: that what would come to you would come at my death, and not before."

"And then?" repeated Margaret, in a low, apathetical sort of voice —"what did he say then?"

"Then he stiffly rose, said the proposal he had hoped to make on behalf of his son must remain unmade, and so marched out. They are a proud, stuck-up set, Margaret: we are better off without them."

"Yes. Perhaps we are."

"You do not regret it, child?" he added, a shade of anxiety visible in his voice.

"Papa, I do not regret Captain Hoare. I do not really care for him."

## II.

It was a foggy day in November, sixteen or seventeen months subsequent to the above events. The dusk of evening was drawing on, and Margaret Channing sat in front of a large fire, her eyes fixed dreamily on the red coals. What did she see in them? Was she tracing out the

fatal mistake she had made? She had been a sadder and a wiser girl since then.

Never but once, since, had she seen Adam Grainger; and that was accidentally. Margaret despised herself thoroughly for the despicable part she played. She was endowed with sound sense and good feeling, and she now believed that a species of mania must have come over her. But she had reaped her punishment: for her heart's sunshine had gone out with Adam Grainger.

A circumstance had this day caused her mind to revert more particularly to the past: the announcement in the public papers of the marriage of Captain Hoare. He had wedded a high-born lady, one of his own order. Strange to say, Miss Channing had not received an offer of marriage since that prodigal day which had brought her two; strange, because she was a handsome and popular girl, occupying a good position, and looked upon as a fortune. The neglect caused her no regret; and it is a question whether she would have said "Yes," had such been offered her. Thought and experience had come to Margaret Channing, and she knew, now, that something apart from wealth and grandeur was necessary to constitute the happiness of married life. She had learnt, also, to be less fond of gaiety than formerly; she had become awake to the startling truth that life cannot be made up of pleasure and self-indulgence; that it has earnest duties which call imperatively for fulfilment. So Margaret sat over the fire this evening in her usual reflective, but not thankless or repining mood; if the last year or two could come over again, how differently would she act! She was interrupted by the entrance of her father. He drew an easy chair close to the fire and sat down, shivering.

"Margaret, I wish you would write a note for me. I don't feel well. It is so cold to-day!"

"Dear papa!" exclaimed Margaret, in surprise. "It is quite warm: a muggy, close day. I was thinking how uncomfortable this great fire made the room."

"I tell you, child, it is cold; wretchedly cold. Or else I have caught cold and feel it so. What have you rung for?"

"For lights, papa. I cannot see to write."

"Don't have them yet: I cannot bear them: my head and eyes are aching. There's no hurry about the note for this hour to come."

Margaret sat down again. Dr. Channing was leaning back in the chair, his hands in a listless attitude, and his eyes closed. She gently touched one of the hands. It was burning with fever.

"Papa! let me send for Mr. Williams."

"Now, there you go, Margaret, jumping to extremes," was the peevish rejoinder. "What do I want with a doctor? If I take some gruel and go to bed early, I shall be all right in the morning."

Dr. Channing was not "all right" in the morning. He was worse,

and unable to rise. His daughter, without asking this time, sent for Mr. Williams. Before two days had elapsed Mr. Williams brought a physician : and the physician brought another. Dr. Channing was in imminent danger.

Margaret scarcely left his bedside. Though she would not allow herself to fear. Hope was strong within her. It proved to be a delusive hope. In little more than a week Dr. Channing was dead. And had died without a last farewell, for since the third day of his illness he had not recognized even Margaret.

Margaret had borne up bravely, but now she was utterly cast down. Ten days ago he was full of health and life, and now stretched there!

She had no near relatives to turn to for comfort in her sorrow. Plenty of carriages drove to the door with ceremonious cards and condolences; but *these* are no solace to the stricken heart. In one respect it was well for Margaret that she was alone. Had there been any one to act for her, she would have lain down unresistingly to give way to her grief: as it was, she was compelled to be up and doing. There were so many things to be thought of, so many orders to give.

The funeral must be settled, and Margaret must see the undertaker. She was inexperienced in these matters, but thought, in her honour and affection for the dead, that she could not give orders for a too sumptuous procession. It is a very common mistake. The same day that she had arranged this, her father's solicitor called, to whom it had not occurred to her, in her trouble, to write.

Mr. Padmore inquired what use he could be of, and they proceeded to speak about the funeral. Margaret was mentioning the directions she had given, when he interrupted her, speaking impulsively.

"My dear Miss Channing, have you considered the enormous expense of such a funeral?"

Margaret looked at him indignantly. "No, sir, I have not taken *expense* into my consideration."

"But—pardon me—are you sure that you are justified in thus incurring such an outlay of money?"

Her spirits were broken with sorrow, and she burst into tears.

Mr. Padmore fidgeted on his chair. "My dear young lady, what I meant to ask was, whether you are sure you will have the money to pay for it?"

"What?" uttered Margaret.

"I fear that Dr. Channing has not died rich. Not, indeed, in easy circumstances."

Margaret thought the lawyer must be dreaming. Dr. Channing not in easy circumstances, when their house was so full of luxury!

But it was that very luxury which had assisted to impoverish Dr. Channing, Mr. Padmore said, when explanations were entered on. Ever since he had resided in town, his rate of living had far exceeded

his income, neither had he been quite a free man previously. He had borrowed money at different times, which was yet unpaid.

Margaret's heart sank within her as she listened. A hasty thought occurred to her. "There is the insurance money! Papa had insured his life."

"My dear, yes. But there are debts."

She dropped her head upon her hand. It was a startling communication.

"I did not know that you were wholly unacquainted with these facts," the lawyer continued. "I hope you will not feel that I have spoken unkindly in alluding to them."

"No, no; I thank you; it was right to let me hear this. But allow me, Mr. Padmore," she added, with sudden energy—"allow me to know all my position: do not hide anything. Am I to understand that my dear father leaves no money behind him? None?"

"I cannot tell that, yet. If any, it will be very trifling. Nothing like—I am grieved to say it—nothing like a provision for you."

"Oh, I do not think of myself," she said, in a pained tone. "I am thinking what a weight all this must have been upon his mind."

So the costly ceremony was countermanded, for a more simple one.

Dr. Channing's affairs turned out to be as Mr. Padmore stated. There was sufficient to pay the debts, and but a very small surplus over that—about a hundred and sixty or seventy pounds. The furniture was disposed of advantageously, standing as it was, to the parties who had taken the house off Margaret's hands, and the carriages and horses were sold at a friendly auction.

It was the night before Margaret Channing was to quit her home. She had remained in it until the last, superintending and arranging. The books and the plate she had only that day sent away to the place where they were to be sold; and she had packed up her own clothes and effects, ready to be removed with her on the morrow. Altogether she was very tired, and sat down on a low chair before the fire, her head aching. How miserably the new year had come in for her!

She sat looking into the fire—her old habit—tracing out events in her imagination. Friends, but not many, had pressed invitations upon her at the time of Dr. Channing's death—"Come and stay a week with us;" or "a few days," or "a month," as the case might be. But Margaret said "No" to all. She deemed it best to have no deceitful procrastinations, but to grapple at once with her position. She had done so, and decided upon her plans. She was well-educated and accomplished, and she resolved to go out as governess. There would be little difficulty in finding a desirable appointment for the daughter of Dr. Channing. As she sat there, a remembrance came over her of Captain Hoare—of the position she had once thought to occupy as his wife: how different that romance from this reality! But not half so

much did she shrink from this remembrance as she did at another one —her unjustifiable conduct to Adam Grainger. She had thrown away the dearly coveted hope of being his wife; thrown it away for a chimera which had failed her. Oh! to compare what she might have been with what she was! with her isolated situation, her expected life of labour! Next, her thoughts wandered to her father; and tears came on, and she cried long and bitterly.

A servant, the only one she had retained in the house, came in and aroused her. "A gentleman has called, ma'am," she said, "and wants to know if he can see you. Here's his card."

Margaret held it to the fire, and strained her dim eyes over it. "Mr. Grainger. What can he want?" she mentally exclaimed. "It must be something about the insurance. Show the gentleman in here, Mary; and light the lamp."

He shook hands with her as he entered, with more of sympathy and tenderness of manner than he might have done, had he not detected the change in her—the once blooming Margaret Channing. Her tearful cheek was wan and pale, and her frame much thinner than formerly; unless the deep black of her mourning attire deceived him.

"I beg you to excuse this interruption," he began, when the maid had quitted the room; "I am here at the desire of my mother. She thinks there has been some mistake—that you did not receive the note she wrote to you last week."

"I have not received any note from Mrs. Grainger," replied Margaret, pressing her hand upon her side, for her heart was wildly beating at the presence of one whom she still fondly loved. "Except one she kindly wrote to me when papa died."

"Not that; you replied to that, I believe; this one was written on Thursday or Friday last. Its purport, Miss Channing, was to beg the favour of your spending a little time with my mother when you leave here. I"—he hastened to add—"am no longer living at home."

The tears rushed into Margaret's eyes. "Every one is so very kind," she said. "I am much indebted to Mrs. Grainger for thinking of me; but I must decline. Though I will certainly go down and personally thank her. She is not able to move out of doors, I believe."

"She has not been for several months past. She wished me to inquire into your plans: though I know not whether you may deem it an impertinence."

"No, no," answered Margaret, scarcely able to prevent the tears falling, so miserably did old recollections, combined with present low spirits, tell upon her that evening. "I feel obliged by Mrs. Grainger's kind interest. I am going to-morrow to Mr. Padmore's for a week or two; he and Mrs. Padmore would have it so. By the end of that time I hope to have found a permanent home. Friends are already looking out for me. I must turn my abilities to account now."

"But it is not well that you should do so," he rejoined, with some agitation of manner—"it is not right for Dr. Channing's daughter. We heard of your determination from Mr. Padmore, and it grieved and vexed my mother. She would be so delighted, Miss Channing, if you would, at any rate for the present, make your home with her."

Margaret did not answer. She was struggling to suppress her rebellious feelings.

"If you would but put up with her ailments, she says, and be free and gay as in your own home, she would be more happy than she has been since the death of Isabel. Allow me to urge the petition also, Miss Channing."

Margaret shook her head, but the tears dropped forth uncontrolled, and she covered her face with her hands. Mr. Grainger advanced; he drew her hands away; he bent over her with a whisper.

"Margaret! I would rather urge one of my own. That you would come—after awhile—to *my* home."

She rose up shaking. What did he mean?

"Has the time come for me to ask you once again to be my wife? Oh! let me hope it has! Margaret, dearest Margaret, it was in this room you rejected me: let it be in this room that you atone for it."

"I can never atone for it," she replied, with a burst of anguish. "Do not waste words upon me, Mr. Grainger; I am not worth it."

"You can atone for it, Margaret. You can let my home be your home, my name your name; you can join with me in forgetting this long estrangement, and promise to be my dearest wife."

"But I do not deserve this," she sobbed. "I deserve only your contempt and hatred."

"Hush, hush, Margaret! You shall take my love instead—if you will treasure now what you once flung away."

"Indeed I do not deserve your love," she murmured; "it is too great reward for me."

"Is it?" he answered, as he wound his arms round her. "It shall be yours, Margaret, for ever and for ever."

## MISSED.

THE moon's silver arrows fell at our feet:
My love, he cried:
"Ere the next bright bow be bent in the blue
Be thou my bride."

And I answered lightly: "There is no haste;
Though moon and moon
Wax and wane, and wax; the sun run his course;
'Twere all too soon."

He upreared his head; he unlocked my hand:
His words fell low;
"For that which we hate 'tis ever too soon—
No growth too slow.

"Ah! thou lov'st me not." "By thy leave," I said;
"There's love and love:
That thy love is truer love than mine own
Is yet to prove.

"'Tis the waving corn and sweet-smelling flowers
Give joy to me;
'Tis the honey and fatt'ning meal alone
Contenteth thee.

"Than rich autumn's splendour fairer I wis
Is budding May:
To be wooed is sweeter far than to wed;
Red dawn than day."

"Thou hast had thy maying," he cried in wrath,
And left my side:
"I must seek my harvest elsewhere, and find
Another bride."

"Success to thy search!" I laughed; and he went.
Charley, my own!
The rose-tints paled in my heaven when I
Was left alone.

But thou hadst thy noon; thy harvest of bliss;
Thy corn and wine.
Was the bread so sweet? Did thy cup lack naught
Of flavour fine?

I know I've missed somewhat: I feared to brush
With hasty lip
From the fruit the bloom; but I snapt the stem
And let it slip.

So I lost my peach: you let go my love:
Ah, well a-day!
Each thing in its season: not all in each,
Nor each for aye.

EMMA RHODES

HARRY FURNISS. J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

*MARCH* 2, 1874.

# IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MR. PERCY OSMOND.

"WE shall not be able to leave Paris for five or six weeks." So wrote Edith West to Lionel Dering at Park Newton.

Mrs. Garside's sister—her sister by marriage only—was dead. The house, plate, and furniture were to be sold, and Mrs. Garside had much to do. Edith, as a matter of course, must stay with her aunt. Lionel, if he wanted to see his promised wife, must go to Paris : and to Paris he decided that he would go.

The same post which brought him this letter from Edith brought him another from India, written by his uncle, General St. George. The old soldier's letter ran as under :

"My dear Nephew,—Allow me to congratulate you onyour good fortune, the news of which followed close upon the intimation of my poor brother's death. I can safely say that there is no one in whose hands I would sooner see the family estates than yours. I contracted a very warm affection for you during my last visit to England, and that feeling has not diminished with time. But you must change your name, my dear boy. I know that you are a St. George at heart, and you must be one in name also. However, that is one of the things that we can discuss fully when I see you again. Please Heaven that will be before either you or I are many months older.

"Yes, my dear nephew, it is even so. The old horse is nearly worn out at last. People begin to whisper that he is no longer equal to his work ; and although the sound of the trumpet and the clash of arms have still their old charm for his ears, the day must shortly come when he will

hear them for the last time. In brief, Lionel, putting aside what other people may think, I feel myself that I am getting creaky and out of repair, and a great longing has come over me to spend the few remaining days that may be left me somewhere near that dear old homestead where I first drew breath.

"I will write you full particulars in a week or two. Your brother Richard is in good health, and is prospering. I had a letter from him only a few days ago. As things have turned out, it is perhaps quite as well that he came out to India instead of you.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"LIONEL ST. GEORGE."

"He shall live with us at Park Newton," said Lionel to himself as he folded up the letter. "It will be like finding a second father to have dear old Uncle Lionel come and share our home."

A few days later Lionel received a note from Tom Bristow. It was addressed to Gatehouse Farm, and had been sent from thence to Park Newton, Tom not having heard of Lionel's change of fortune. It was dated from Egypt, and was written with Tom's usual brevity. "Health much improved. Hope to be back in England in about three months from now. Shall take early opportunity of looking you up. The dear old days at the farm are not forgotten." That was nearly all.

"He will be here in time for the wedding," said Lionel as he read the note. "I should like Tom Bristow to be my best man on that important occasion."

Nearly a fortnight passed away before Lionel Dering was able to leave the house. The wound on his head was a very severe one, and for the first two days and nights he lay in bed, to all outward seeming more dead than alive. As soon as he was in a condition to do so he sent for the Duxley superintendent of police, and told him confidentially all that he knew of the affair. Lionel was strongly averse to all unnecessary publicity, and was especially desirous that no mention of the case should be made in the local newspapers. Had he been asked to state his reasons for wishing to keep the matter so private, he would perhaps have found it difficult to do so. Nevertheless, the feeling to act thus was strong upon him.

It was proved, on investigation, that the intruder, whoever he might be, had obtained access to the house through one of the library windows. One of the panes had been cut with a diamond, and the window then unfastened. Next came the discovery of a secret passage from the library to the late Mr. St. George's bedroom. Those among the servants who had been at Park Newton under the old régime denied all knowledge of the existence of any such passage, and their statements might well be true.

The passage in question was one of a kind by no means uncommon in houses built a couple of centuries ago. It was simply a very narrow

staircase, built in the thickness of the wall, and leading from the ground floor to the floor above. The entrance to it was behind a sliding panel in the bedroom; but both exit and entrance were so carefully hidden that a person might pass his whole life at Park Newton without ever suspecting the existence of such a place. One of Lionel's first acts, after a thorough exploration of the passage had been made, was to send for the bricklayers and have both entrance and exit walled up.

But the little closet or cupboard in the bedroom had still to be considered. It was nothing more than a small square opening in the wall; and, like the staircase, it was hidden behind the panelling, and secured still further by means of a secret spring. It was evident that the late Mr. St. George had known the secret of the cupboard, and had used the place as a safe depository for money and other valuables. It was equally certain that this latter fact must have been well known to Lionel's assailant; and there could be no doubt that the object of the midnight raid had been to rifle the cupboard of its contents. Some testimony as to the quality of those contents had been unavoidably left behind in the hurry of flight. Three or four small diamonds, and a couple of sovereigns of recent coinage, were found scattered on the floor: but as to the further value of the property stolen there were no means of judging.

Lionel had no reason for suspecting any of the people immediately about him, nor did such a thought ever find a lodging in his mind. The more he considered the matter, the more certain he felt that the man of whom he had caught a glimpse in the shrubbery was really the thief. But even granting such to be the case, the mystery was no nearer solution than before. Whoever the man might be, he had got clear away without leaving the slightest memento behind him by which he might be traced.

Lionel's first visit, when he was able to get out of doors again, was to a little cottage on the outskirts of Duxley, where lived an old man, Joseph Nixon by name, who had been body-servant to the late Mr. St. George, and to his father before him. Nixon was now living on a pension granted him by the family; and it seemed to Lionel that he would be more likely than anyone else to have a knowledge of the hidden staircase, and the cupboard in the bedroom wall. Lionel found the old man infirm in body but clear in mind. Yes, he said, in answer to Lionel's inquiries, he knew all about the staircase in the wall, and the little closet behind the panelling in his old master's bedroom. Mr. St. George, who was somewhat peculiar in his ways, was in the habit of keeping a considerable amount of ready money in the house, and used the cupboard as a secure place of deposit known to himself and Nixon alone.

"But was there nothing besides money ever kept there?" asked Lionel.

"Yes, sir; there was a diamond necklace, and some other things as well," answered Nixon.

"It was rather a strange place in which to keep a diamond necklace, was it not?"

"Well, sir, this is how it was. When Mr. Arthur St. George was a young man, he was engaged to be married to a handsome young lady. The wedding day was fixed, and everything ready, when he made her a present of a diamond necklace. She wore it once only—at a grand ball to which he took her. Next day she was taken ill; a week later she was dead. Her friends sent back the necklace, and my master seemed as if he could never bear to part from it after that time. Many and many a time I've known him to sleep with it under his pillow."

Here was a page of romance out of his uncle's life that was quite fresh to Lionel.

"He was one o' the old-fashioned sort of lovers, was Mr. St. George," added Nixon. "He didn't know what it was to change."

"And are you certain that my uncle and yourself were the only two people who knew of the existence of the staircase and the cupboard? Try to remember. Think carefully before you answer."

"It's not in my knowledge," answered the old man, slowly, "that anybody knew about either of them places but my master and myself. Unless, maybe ——"

"Yes—unless what?"

"Unless Mr. Kester St. George happened to know about them."

"And do you really think that my cousin Kester does know that there are two such places in existence?" asked Lionel after a pause.

"Now I come to think of it, sir, he does know about the cupboard. Going suddenly into the bedroom one day, without knowing that he was there, I found him standing by the cupboard, with the door open, and the diamond necklace in his hand. It was not my place to say anything, and it seemed no more than likely, at that time, that some day the necklace would be his own property. But, as regards the staircase, sir, I don't know as Mr. Kester was ever told about that."

There was nothing more to be learned, so Lionel took a kindly leave of the old man, who seemed as if he could not sufficiently express his delight at not having been forgotten by "the new master."

Lionel neither could nor would believe that Kester had had any hand in the midnight robbery. Nevertheless, he sent word next day to the chief constable of Duxley not to proceed any further with his investigation of the affair. In his letters to Edith he had been careful not to mention the matter in any way. It would only have frightened her, and could have done no possible good.

As soon as he was thoroughly recovered he set out for Paris. He had not seen Edith for several weeks, and longer separation was unendurable.

One morning there came a letter to Edith, in which Lionel stated that he should be in Paris twelve hours after the receipt of it.

What a day of joyful expectation was that! Edith could neither read, nor work, nor even sit quietly and do nothing. All she could do was to wander absently from room to room, touching a few notes on the piano now and again, or gaze dreamily out of the windows, or feed the noisy troop of sparrows that assembled daily on the window-sill for their accustomed bounty. She sent out for a Railway Guide that she might be enabled to follow Lionel step by step on his journey. "Now he is at Dover," she said to herself. A little while later, "Now the steamer is nearly at Calais." Later still, "Now he has left Calais. Half his journey is over. In six more hours he will be here."

"Come and have some tea, child," said Mrs. Garside. "I declare you look quite worn and anxious. Mr. Dering will think I've been working you to death."

Mrs. Garside was very glad on her own account that Lionel was coming. The forms and processes of French law in connection with the property left her by her sister troubled her exceedingly. She knew that she could count on Lionel's good-natured assistance in extricating her from sundry perplexities into which she had fallen.

How slowly the hours went by; as hours, when they are watched, always seem to do! Mrs. Garside began to prophesy. "Perhaps the train will be delayed," she said. "Perhaps he will think it too late to call. Perhaps we shall not see him till midday to-morrow." To all which Edith could only respond with a doleful "Perhaps."

"But for all that," said Mrs. Garside, "we will have dinner ready for him to the minute. Men are never good-tempered when they are hungry. Always bear that little fact in mind, Edith, when you get married."

So a choice little repast was prepared; and Edith went out and bought some flowers with which to decorate the table; then the candles were lighted; and after that they could only sit and wait.

By-and-by, a cab came rattling into the courtyard. Then there came the sound of welcome footsteps on the stairs, and next moment Lionel was with them.

What two happy hours were those before the time came for them to bid each other good-night! But, then, what a little suffices to make us happy when we are in love! Kind-hearted Mrs. Garside was happy in the happiness of Edith, and in the freshness and change which Lionel's welcome arrival brought with it. Edith and Lionel asked nothing more, for the time being, than to be able to see each other, and speak to each other, and to spell out that silent language of the eyes which has often a meaning far more deep and heartfelt than any words can convey.

In Paris, that year, the spring seemed to come earlier than usual. Already the Bois was beginning to clothe itself in a mantle of tenderest green. The daylight hours were warm and bright. Hardly a cloud was

to be seen in the sky. All the gay world of Paris was on the qui vive. It was a splendid moving panorama, framed with flowers and softest buds just bursting into leaf. To the fancies of Edith and Lionel it almost seemed as if all this glamour and brightness had been devised by some kind fairy godmother for their especial behoof, simply because they were under love's sweet witchery, and that it would all vanish like a dream the moment they two should have quitted the scene. They spent hours in the Louvre looking at the pictures. They spent more hours on the pleasant Boulevards, jostled by troops of pleasure seekers. But it is more than probable that, as sightseers, they saw very little indeed. They moved like dreamers in the midst of a crowd, like denizens of a more etherealized world, who breathed, as of right, a finer atmosphere, and in whose veins flowed the only true elixir of life. It was a season of happiness, pure and unalloyed. They saw nothing—not even in their dreams had they any prevision—of the huge black cloud whose edge already touched the horizon; whose sable folds would soon shut out the sunshine and the flowers; but whose thunders would smite in vain the strong pure rock of their mutual love.

By the end of a fortnight, thanks to the assistance given by Lionel, Mrs. Garside's legal difficulties were at an end. After a few last lingering days in Lutetia the Beautiful, they went back to London together. Lionel saw the two ladies safely housed in Roehampton Terrace, and then bade them farewell for a little while. The marriage was to take place in June, and there was much to be done before that time.

Having some purchases to make, Lionel stopped in London for a few hours, after leaving Edith, before continuing his journey home. He had kept telling himself, as he came along in the train, that he must not fail to call on Kester before going back to Park Newton. He wanted his cousin to fix a date for his promised visit. But when London was reached, and his business done, he still felt unaccountably reluctant to pay the call. He shrank from making any inquiry of himself as to the origin of this strange reluctance, but its existence he could not dispute. Was it possible that some half-formed and unacknowledged doubt was at work in his mind as to whether the man who had so brutally struck him down was any other than Kester St. George? If so, it was a doubt that never clothed itself with words even to himself. But, be that as it may, four o'clock was reached; his train started at five, and Great Carrington Street was still as far away as ever.

His irresolution was brought to a sudden end at last. He was gazing absently into Colnaghi's window, when a hand was laid lightly on his shoulder, and his cousin's musical voice fell on his ear.

"What! in town again, old fellow? You might have let one know that you were coming."

All Lionel's half-shaped doubts vanished in a moment under the influence of his cousin's genial smile and hearty grasp of the hand. As

he stood there his conscience pricked him that he should have wronged Kester for a moment even in thought.

"I have only just got back from Paris," he said. "I am glad to have met you, because I want you to fix a date for your promised visit to Park Newton."

Kester was not alone. His arm was linked in that of another man. "Before fixing anything," he said, "I must introduce to you my particular friend, Mr. Percy Osmond.—Osmond, my cousin, Li Dering, of whom you have frequently heard me speak."

The two men bowed.

"Is it possible," asked Lionel, "that you are a brother of the Mr. Kenneth Osmond whom I met when in America?"

"Kenneth Osmond and I are certainly brothers," answered the other.

"Then I am very pleased to make your acquaintance. Your brother and I travelled together for six months through some of the wildest parts of North America. I never met with a man in my life whom I esteemed more or liked better."

"Look here," said Kester. "We can't stand talking in the street for ever. My club's not three minutes away. Let us go there and chat over a bottle of their dry champagne."

Mr. Percy Osmond was about eight-and-twenty years old. He was of medium height and slender build, and of a somewhat effeminate appearance. He had good features, and had rather fine black eyes, of which he was particularly proud. But there was a shiftiness about them, a restlessly suspicious look, as though the man at one time had been haunted by some terrible fear, and had never been able to forget it.

His face was closely shaven, except for a thin, silky, black moustache, which he wore with long waxed ends. He was foppishly dressed in the latest fashion, and displayed a profusion of jewellery. But there was something about him so arrogant and self-opinionated, something so coldly contemptuous of other men's feelings and opinions whenever they chanced to clash with his own, that Lionel had not been ten minutes in his company before he said to himself that Mr. Percy Osmond was very different from Mr. Percy Osmond's brother, and could never be included by him among the few men he numbered as his friends.

"So you want to pin me down to a date, do you?" said Kester as they sat down in the smoking-room at the club.

"I should certainly like to fix you, now that I am here," answered Lionel.

"How would this day fortnight suit you?"

"No time could suit me better. And if Mr. Osmond will honour me by coming down to Park Newton at the same time, I need hardly say how pleased I shall be to see him there."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," said Osmond. "Glad to run down to your place, especially as St. George is going. Am thinking of buying a

quiet little country roost myself. Town life is awfully wearing, you know."

Kester laughed aloud. "Osmond would commit suicide before he had been in the country a month," he said. "He is one of those unhappy mortals who cannot live away from bricks and mortar. The shady side of Pall Mall is dearer to him than all the country lanes and hayfields in the world."

"You do me an injustice—really," said Osmond. "Some of my tastes are quite idyllic. No one, for instance, could be fonder of clotted cream than I am. I never shoot, myself—haven't muscle enough for it, you know—yet I have a weakness for grouse pie that almost verges on the sublime."

"Or the ridiculous," interposed Kester.

"By-the-by, I hope you are not without a billiard-table at your place," said Osmond, with that affected little cough which was peculiar to him.

"We have a table on which you shall play all day long if you choose," returned Lionel.

"Then I'll come. Country air and billiards — charming combination! Yes, you may expect to see me at the same time that you see St. George."

He made a memorandum of the date in his tablets; and after a little further talk, he shook hands with Lionel and went, leaving the two cousins together.

Kester looked after him with a sneer. "There goes another gilded fool," he said.

"I thought you introduced him to me as your particular friend," said Lionel.

"I called him my particular friend because he is rich. I can't afford to call any poor man my friend."

"My reason for inviting him to Park Newton was partly because I thought it would please you to have him there at the same time as yourself, and partly out of compliment to his brother, whom I respect and like exceedingly."

"Don't mistake me. I am glad you have asked him down to the old place. As I said before, he is rich, and some day or other he may be useful to me. All the same, he's an awful screw, and thinks as much of one sovereign as I do of five."

"How long have you known him?" asked Lionel.

"For a dozen years at the least. When he was twenty-one he came in for a fortune of twelve thousand pounds. This he contrived to get through very comfortably in the course of a couple of seasons. Then came the climax. For two years longer he managed to pick up a precarious crust among the different friends and acquaintances whom he had made during his more prosperous days. Then, when everybody

had become thoroughly tired of him, he crossed the Atlantic. For the next four years he was lost sight of utterly. When heard of again, he had sunk to the position of marker in a billiard-saloon at New Orleans. After that, he was heard of in several places, but always in dreadfully low water. Then came the story of a murder in which he was said to be somehow mixed up, but nobody on this side seemed ever to get at the truth about it; and the next thing we heard about him was something altogether different. An old maiden aunt had died and had left the scapegrace eighty thousand pounds. Such as you saw him to-day, he turned up in London three months ago. Bitter experience has taught him the value of money. Still he has his weaknesses. What those weaknesses are it is my business just now to find out."

## CHAPTER X.

### MASTER AND MAN.

"SHALL I shut the window, sir? The evening is rather cold."

It was Pierre Janvard, the body-servant of Mr. Kester St. George, who spoke. The place was a room at Park Newton, for Kester had come there on his promised visit. The same suite of rooms had been allotted to him that had been his during his uncle's lifetime—the same furniture was still in them: everything seemed unchanged. "Do you hear the bells, sir?" continued Pierre. "The village ringers are having their Wednesday evening practice. They always used to practise on Wednesday evenings, sir, if you remember. It seems only like yesterday since you left Park Newton."

To all this Mr. St. George vouchsafed no reply. He was dressing for dinner, a process to which he always attached much importance, and was just at that moment engaged with the knot of his white tie. He was evidently in anything but an amiable mood—a fact of which Pierre was perfectly aware, but did not seem to mind in the least.

"Do you remember, sir, talking to me one evening when you were dressing for dinner, just as it might be now, of what you would do, sir, and what alterations you would make, when Park Newton was all your own? You would build a new wing, and a new entrance-hall, and cut a fresh carriage-drive through the Park. And then the stables were to be rebuilt, and the gardens altered and improved, and ——"

"Pierre, you are a fool," said Mr. St. George, with emphasis.

The ghost of a smile flickered across the valet's staid features, but he did not answer.

Mr. St. George looked at his watch. It still wanted half an hour to dinner-time. He felt in no humour for seeing either Osmond or his cousin till they should all meet at table. He would stroll as far as the little summer-house on the Knoll, and look once more on a scene that he remembered so well. He put on a light overcoat and a soft hat, and,

going leisurely downstairs, he went slowly through the picture-gallery and the conservatory, and let himself out by a side door into the grounds at the back of the house. Every step that he took was haunted for him with memories of the past. His heart was full of bitterness and resentment that Fate, as he called it, should have played with him at such a terrible game of cross purposes, and have ended by winning everything from him. "If I had never been brought up to look upon it as sure to be one day my own," he said, "I could have borne to see it another man's without regret. Pierre is right; I did dream and plan and say to myself that I would do this thing and that thing when the time came for me to be master here. And now I, Kester St. George, am nothing better than a pauper and a blackleg, and am here on sufferance—an invited guest under the very roof that ought in justice to be mine!"

He took the winding path through the plantation that led to the summit of the Knoll. The summer-house was unlocked as usual. He went in and sat down. The scene before him and around him was very pleasant to look upon, lighted up, as it was just then, by the fading splendours of an April sunset. The Hall itself, clasped tenderly round with shrubberies of softest green, lay close at his feet. Far and wide on either side stretched the Park, with its clumps of noble old trees that had seen generation after generation of the St. Georges come and go like creatures of a day, and still flourished unchanged. Away in the distance could be seen Highworth and other prosperous farms, all part and parcel of the Park Newton estate.

"All this belongs of right to me," muttered Kester to himself, as his eyes took in the whole pleasant picture; "and it would have been mine but for ——"

He did not finish the sentence even to himself, but the gloom on his face deepened, and for a few moments the unhappy man sat with drooping head, seeing nothing but some terrible picture which his own words had conjured up.

He roused himself from his reverie with a sigh. The sun was nearly lost to view. Eastward the glooms of evening were beginning to enfold the landscape in their dusky wings. Blue curls of smoke wound slowly upward from the twisted chimneys of the Hall. A few belated rooks came flying over the Knoll on their way to their nests in the wood. The picture was redolent of homelike beauty and repose. "Only one life stands between me and all this," he muttered, as his eyes drank in the scene greedily. "Only one life. If Lionel Dering were to die to-night, I should be master to-morrow of all that I see before me."

He rose and left the summer-house. He could hear the clanging of the dinner-bell. It was time to go.

"Only one life. And what is the value of any one particular life among the thousands that are born and die every day? Who would

miss him—who would regret him? No one. He is an isolated link in the great chain of humanity. He might die to-night, or to-morrow, or next day. Stranger things than that have happened before now."

He pulled his hat over his brows and went slowly down the pathway, and was presently lost to view among the gloomy depths of the plantation.

Left alone, Pierre Janvard settled himself comfortably in an easy chair to enjoy the perusal of one of Mr. St. George's yellow-backed French novels. He was a thin, staid-looking man of fifty, decidedly more English than French in appearance. He was partially bald, and was closely shaven, except for two small whiskers of the kind known as "mutton chop." What hair he had was thickly sprinkled with gray, and was carefully trained and attended to. He had a good forehead, a rather large aquiline nose, and thin, firmly-cut lips. In his suit of well brushed black, and his spotless white tie, he looked the model of a respectable and thoroughly trustworthy servant. He looked more than that. Had he been set down at a public dinner among a miscellaneous assemblage of guests, a stranger would probably have picked him out as a banker or a rich merchant, or might even have asked, and have been pardoned for asking, whether he were not some celebrated lawyer, or member of the Lower House. He spoke English with a French accent as a matter of course, but he could express himself as readily in one language as the other. He had a particularly quiet, noiseless way of going about his duties that many people might have liked, but which would have been intolerable to others. You never seemed to know that he was near you till you found him at your elbow.

Such as he was—this smug, respectable-looking valet—his antecedents were somewhat peculiar. His grandfather had been one of the sub-executioners of Paris during the terrible days of the Great Revolution. Later on, his father had for many years held the post of public executioner in one of the large towns in the south of France. Pierre himself had been intended for the same profession, and had, when a youth, assisted his father on more than one occasion in the performance of his ghastly duties. But the death of Janvard père brought a change of prospects. The widow was persuaded to come over to England and invest the family savings in the purchase of a small blanchisserie at the West End of London; and from that date Pierre's connection with his native country was a broken one.

Kester St. George's tastes were all luxurious ones. One of the first things he did after he came of age was to look out for a valet. Pierre Janvard was recommended to him by a friend, and he engaged him at once. The Frenchman had served him faithfully and well, had travelled with him, and had lived with him at Park Newton up to the date of Kester's quarrel with his uncle. But when the whole of Kester's income was swept away at one blow, and he was thrown on the world without a

sovereign that he could call his own, then Jamard and he of necessity parted. Their coming together again was quite a matter of accident. It so happened that, a few days after Kester had won heavily on a certain race, he encountered Janvard in the street. The Frenchman touched his hat, and Kester stopped and spoke to him. The result was that Janvard, who was out of a situation at that time, was re-engaged by St. George, whose old, luxurious tastes cropped up the moment he found himself in abundant funds. Those funds could not last for ever, and a season of impecuniosity had again set in; but the bond between master and man had not again been broken.

Janvard stayed on with Mr. St. George. He was thoroughly trustworthy, or so Kester believed; and he probably knew more of his master's secrets—more of certain shady transactions that were never intended to bear the light of day—than any other man living.

Janvard had one relation in England—a sister—with whom he was on terms of close and affectionate intercourse. Both he and his sister were unmarried, and they both intended to remain so. Madame Janvard—she was called Madame out of compliment to her age, which was nearer fifty than forty—kept a small boarding-house for her countrymen in a narrow street no great distance from Leicester Square. She had saved money, had madame. So had her brother. And the secret ambition of the two was to unite their fortunes, and start together as proprietors of a first-class hotel.

Pierre's holidays and leisure time, when he was in town, were always spent with his sister, in whose house one little cockloft of a room was set apart specially for him, and was full of his property. Here he kept a few boxes of choice cigars for his own private smoking, and a varied assortment of French novels and plays, together with sundry articles of bric-à-brac which he had picked up during his travels. But, in addition to these articles, the room contained several remarkable mementos of the Great Revolution, which had come down to Pierre from his grandfather. In one corner hung the veritable pair of shoes worn by Charlotte Corday on the day that she stabbed Marat. In a little glass box on the chimney-piece was a lock of hair shorn from the head of Marie Antoinette after execution. Near it was a handkerchief that had belonged to the Princess de Lamballe. On a bracket opposite the window stood a life-size bust of Marat himself, the hideous head crowned with the bonnet rouge, and inscribed below, *Le Genie de la Revolution.* Near at hand was a working model of the guillotine, made by the redoubtable hands of old Martin Janvard, and close by it a model of one of the tumbrils in which the condemned were conveyed to the Place de la Grève. In this room Pierre and his sister had many pleasant little banquets all to themselves, and many a long chat on matters past, present, and to come. Not having her to talk to to-night, he was going to write to her, which was the next best thing he could do. So when he had yawned through a

couple of chapters of the novel, he took pen and paper, and sat down at Mr. St. George's table, being perfectly aware that he was safe from interruption for another hour at the least. Judging by what Pierre Janvard wrote, there would seem, this evening, to have been a strange similarity in the trains of thought at work in the minds of master and man.

"We are once again back in the old place, chère Margot," wrote the Frenchman. "Was it only yesterday, or is it more than a year ago, since we were in these rooms last? Everything seems as it used to be, except that the old master's voice is heard no longer. He lies cold and quiet in the churchyard. Nothing else seems changed, and yet how changed is all! For a new master now reigns at Park Newton, and that master it not Monsieur Kester St. George. Of course, we have known of this all along, but not till we came here did we seem to realize all that it means. One man, and one man only, stands between my master and all this vast property. That man, as you know already, is his own cousin. He is not married, but he may be before long. If he were only to catch a fever and die—if he were only to commit suicide—if he were only to fall into the river and be drowned—ah, my faith! what luck would then be ours.

"And yet, somehow, little one, I feel as if I should hardly like to change places with this Monsieur Dering. I don't know why I feel so, but there the feeling is, and I tell you of it. Life is so strangely uncertain, you know; and it seems to me more uncertain still when you stand so terribly in the light of another man. Perhaps you will say that I am superstitious. So be it. But can any man say where superstition begins and where it ends, even in his own mind? I can't. All I know is this: that if I were Monsieur Dering, the last man in the world whom I would ask to cross my threshold would be Monsieur Kester St. George."

A fortnight had come and gone since the arrival of Kester St. George and Percy Osmond at Park Newton. Another week would bring their visit to an end, and Lionel Dering was fain to confess to himself that he should not be sorry when that time had arrived. This was more particularly the case as regards Osmond, of whose company he had grown heartily tired. There was, indeed, about Osmond, little or nothing that could have any attraction for a man like Lionel Dering. The points of difference between them were too great for any hope to exist that they could ever be bridged over. Friendship between two such men was an impossibility.

With Kester St. George the case was somewhat different. Lionel would gladly have clasped his cousin's hand in friendship, but he had begun to find out that beneath all Kester's geniality, and easy laughing way of dealing with everything that came before him, there existed a nature cold, hard, and cynical, against which the white wings of Friend-

ship or of Love might beat in vain for ever. He was always pleasant, always smiling, always good-tempered: yet it seemed impossible to get near him, or to feel sure that you knew him better at the end of a year than on the first day you met him. Then, too, Lionel was not without an uneasy sense that not only the servants at the Hall, but his own social equals in the neighbourhood, looked upon him, in some measure, as an interloper, and seemed to think that he must, in some inscrutable way, have defrauded his cousin out of his birthright. No wonder Lionel felt that it would be a relief when the visit should have come to an end.

He had taken an opportunity one day, when Kester seemed in a more confidential mood than usual, of again hinting at the pleasure it would give him if his cousin would only accept that three thousand a year out of the estate which it was his grandfather's manifest wish should be Kester's share of the property. But Kester froze the moment the subject was broached, and Lionel saw plainly how utterly useless any further persistence in it would be.

Both Squire Culpepper and Mr. Cope had called at Park Newton as soon as they heard that Kester St. George was down there on a visit, and a day or two later Lionel invited those gentlemen, together with several other old friends of his cousin, to a dinner at the Hall in honour of the occasion. Three or four return dinners had been given by different people, and now the day was come when they were all to go and dine with the Squire at Pincote—Lionel, Kester, and Mr. Percy Osmond.

The afternoon was cold and gloomy, with frequent showers of rain. Luncheon was just over, and Kester St. George, who had been out riding all the morning, was sitting alone before a cozy fire in his dressing-room, keeping the unwelcome company of his own thoughts. In his hands was a cheque which Osmond, who had just left him, had given him in settlement of a long-standing debt at cards.

"The greedy hound!" he muttered to himself. "It was like drawing blood from a stone to get even this paltry strip of paper from him. And yet if this were made out for eight thousand pounds instead of for *eight only*, it would be honoured. Aye, if it were for six times eight thousand pounds: and there would then be a little fortune left. One thing's very certain. I must raise a couple of thousand somewhere before I'm many hours older, or else I shall have to make a bolt of it—have to put salt water between myself and the hounds that are for ever baying at my heels. If Nantucket had only pulled off the Chester Cup, I should have landed three thousand at the very least. Just like my luck that she should fall lame twelve hours before the race. I *must* have two thousand," he went on as he rose and began to pace the room, "or else submit to be outlawed. Osmond could lend it to me and never feel the loss of it. Shall I ask him? As well try to move a rock. He knows that I'm poor already. If he knew that I was a pauper, he'd cut me dead. No great

loss as things go ; still, I can't afford to lose him. Shall I ask Dering to help me out of my difficulties? No ! never ! never ! Let ruin—outlawry—suicide itself come, rather than that ! "

He sat down again, still twisting and turning the cheque absently between his fingers. " Only a miserable eight pounds ! It's like offering a quarter of a biscuit to a man who is dying of starvation. Mr. Percy Osmond doesn't seem to have paid much attention to the art of caligraphy when he was young. Upon my word I never saw a signature that it would be easier to imitate. All that a clever fellow wants is a blank cheque on the same bank. With that, what wonders might be wrought ! I've heard Osmond say that he always sleeps with his keys under his pillow. Once obtain possession of them, the rest would be easy. But how to get them ? Suppose he gets drunk to night at Pincote, as he is nearly sure to do—why then —— "

His pale face flushed, and a strange light came into his eyes. He mused for a minute or two, then he got up and rang the bell. Pierre answered it.

" Ascertain at what hour the next train starts for London."

In a couple of minutes Pierre came back. " The train for London passes Duxley station at four thirty-six," he said.

" Good. You will just have time to catch it," said Mr. St. George. " You will reach London in two hours and a quarter after you leave Duxley. Take a cab. Find out Boncher. Tell him to telegraph me first thing to-morrow morning, so that the message will reach me here not later than eight o'clock. His telegram must be to this effect : *You are wanted in town immediately on most important business.* Do you understand ? "

" Yes, sir."

" An hour in London will be enough for you. You will be able to catch the eight o'clock down train, and ought to be back in this room by eleven at the latest. In fact, I shall expect to find you here when I return from Pincote."

" Yes, sir."

" And don't say a word to anyone about your journey."

Pierre bowed and left the room.

" Invaluable fellow, that," said Kester aloud. The excitement that had stirred his blood so strangely a few minutes before was still upon him. He was like a man who had screwed himself up to some desperate resolve which he was determined to go through with at every cost.

He began slowly and deliberately to dress himself for dinner.

" There's an old saying, ' Nothing risk nothing have,' " he muttered to himself. " The risk, in this case, seems to be nothing very desperate If I fail, I shall be no worse off than I am now. If I succeed —— " His face blanched as suddenly as if he had seen a ghost.

"I forgot that!" he whispered. "Dering sleeps in the next room to Osmond. What if he should be awake? Even when he does sleep, I've heard him say that the noise of a strange footstep is enough to rouse him. That is a difficulty I never thought of—the biggest difficulty of all."

He was still pondering over this difficulty, whatever it might be, when Osmond burst suddenly into the room.

"Not ready yet?" he said. "What a dilatory fellow you are! We shall have Dering in a devil of a temper if you don't make haste. I'll wait for you, if you don't mind my having a whiff meanwhile."

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

"I say, Dering, it ain't twelve o'clock yet. You'll give me half an hour in the billiard-room before going to roost."

Percy Osmond was the speaker. He was getting out of the brougham which had brought the three gentlemen back from Pincote, where they had been dining. His voice was thick, and his gait unsteady. It was evident that he had been indulging rather too freely in Squire Culpepper's old port.

"You've surely had enough billiards for one night," said Lionel, good-humouredly. "I should have thought that the thrashing you gave young Cope would have satisfied you till to-morrow morning."

"I want to thrash you as I thrashed him."

"You shall thrash me as much as you like in the morning."

"This is what they call country hospitality!" said Osmond, turning to Kester. "Condemned to go to bed at eleven-thirty, like so many virtuous peasants in an opera. No more brandy, no more cigars, no more billiards. Nothing but everlasting bed. How very good we are in the country."

Kester laughed. "I told you that you would soon grow tired of the rural districts," he said.

"The rural districts themselves are all very nice and proper. I've nothing to say against them," said Mr. Osmond, as he sat down deliberately on the stairs, for they were all in the house by this time. "It's the people who live in them that I complain of. To send your guests to bed at eleven-thirty against their will, and to decline a simple game of billiards with one of them because you're afraid to acknowledge that he's the better player of the two—can this be your old English hospitality?"

"My dear Osmond, I will play you a game of billiards with pleasure, if your mind is so set on it," said Lionel. "I had no idea that you were so entêté in the matter. Come along. I daresay the lamps are still alight."

"Spoken like a nobleman," said Osmond, with tipsy gravity. "I accept your apology. Just order up some brandy and seltzer, there's a good fellow. St. George, you'll come and mark for us?"

"With pleasure," said Kester. "I'll join you in two minutes." He left them at the top of the stairs, they going towards the billiard-room. He was anxious to know whether Pierre had got back from London.

Yes, there sat Pierre in the dressing-room, quiet, watchful, and alert as ever. "Everything gone off all right?" said Mr. St. George.

"Everything has gone off quite right, sir," said Pierre.

"There will be no hitch as regards the telegram to-morrow morning, eh?"

"None whatever, sir."

"You need not sit up for me."

"Very well, sir."

"And yet—on second thoughts—you had perhaps better do so."

"Yes, sir."

Kester took off his dress-coat, put on an old shooting-jacket and a smoking-cap, and then went off to the billiard-room.

"Monsieur St. George mean mischief to-night," said Pierre, smiling to himself, and rubbing his hands slowly. "It not very often I see that light in his eye. When I do see it, I know it mean no good to somebody."

Kester found the two men chalking their cues. A servant was mixing a tumbler of brandy-and-seltzer for Osmond.

"I'll play you one game, a hundred up," said Osmond, as soon as the servant had left the room; "and I'll back my own play for ten pounds."

"You know that I never bet," said Lionel.

"I wouldn't give the snuff of a candle for a fellow who hasn't the pluck to back his own play, or his own opinion," said Osmond, with a sneer.

"I don't mind taking you," said Kester, quickly.

"Done!" said Osmond.

Lionel could not repress a movement of annoyance.

Both he and Osmond were good billiard-players, but he was the better of the two. This, however, was a point which Osmond, who was proud of his ability with the cue, would never concede. With Lionel, billiard-playing was an easy, natural gift; with Osmond it was the result of intense study and application. With the former it seemed the easiest thing in the world to play well—with the latter one of the most difficult. They had played much together during Osmond's visit to Park Newton, but Osmond could never lose with equanimity. He became disagreeable and quarrelsome the moment the game began to go against him, and, rather than have a scene under his own roof, Lionel would often play carelessly and allow his opponent to win game after game. Such

had been his intention in the present case till Kester foolishly accepted Osmond's bet. After that, to have lost the game would have been to lose Kester's money also ; and, foolish as was the bet, Lionel did not feel disposed to let Osmond benefit by it. Besides, to win Osmond's money was to touch him in his only vulnerable point, and it seemed to Lionel that he fully deserved to be made to smart.

The game began and went on with varying success. Osmond had drank far too much wine to play well, and Lionel, in a mood of utter indifference, missed stroke after stroke in a way that made Kester groan inwardly with vexation. Lionel, in truth, was disgusted with himself and disgusted with his opponent. "I'd far sooner follow the plough all my life on Gatehouse Farm, than be condemned to associate very much with men like this one," he said to himself. "And yet the world calls him a gentleman !"

"Call the game, St. George," cried Osmond, in his most insolent tone.

"Seventy-five—fifty-two, and your royal highness to play," said Kester.

"None of your sneers," said Osmond. "Seventy-five—fifty-two, eh? —Well, put me on three more.—And three more—very carefully.—A miss, by Jove ! Ought to have had that middle pocket."

"Fifty-two—eighty-one," called St. George.

"How does your ten pounds look now, eh?" asked Osmond, with a chuckle.

"Not very rosy, I must confess," said Kester, with a shrug of his shoulders, and an appealing glance at his cousin.

"I hope you are prepared to pay up if you lose," said Osmond, insolently.

Kester started to his feet, but Lionel laid a hand on his shoulder.

"The game is not lost yet, Mr. Osmond," he said, coldly, but courteously.

"I guess it's in a dying state as far as you're concerned," said Osmond, coughing his little effeminate cough.

Lionel played and made a brilliant break of thirty.

"Eighty-one—eighty-two," called Kester, and there was a triumphant ring in his voice as he did so.

Osmond, white with the rage he could not hide, said nothing. He laid down his cigar, chalked his cue carefully, played, and missed.

"Just like my luck !" he cried, with an oath. "Dering, you might give a fellow something decent to smoke," he added, as he flung his cigar into the grate.

"The cigars are good ones. I smoke them myself," said Lionel, quietly.

"Anyhow, they are not fit to offer to a gentleman."

"I did not offer them to a gentleman. *You* helped yourself."

"Of course I did," he answered, not comprehending the irony of Lionel's remark. "And deuced bad smokes they are."

Lionel played and ran his score up to ninety-eight.

"Two more will make you game," said Kester.

"Two more would not have made him game if he hadn't played with my ball instead of his own," said Osmond, his lips livid with rage.

"I have not played with your ball instead of my own, Mr. Osmond."

"I repeat that you have. After the second cannon in your last break, you played with the wrong ball. You cannoned again, and then resumed play with your own ball."

"You are mistaken—indeed you are," said Lionel, earnestly.

"Oh, of course!" sneered Osmond. "It's not to be expected that you would say anything else."

"Did you see the stroke, Kester?" appealed Lionel.

"Certainly I did. You played with your own ball and not with Mr. Osmond's."

"Of course, Kester is bound to back up all we say! Our bankrupt relation can't afford to do otherwise. He has ten pounds on the game, and ——"

"By Heaven, Osmond!" burst out Mr. St. George. Lionel again laid his hand on his cousin's shoulder.

"Mr. Osmond is my guest," he said, impressively. "In a moment of temper he has made use of certain expressions which he will be the first to regret to-morrow. Let us look upon the game as a drawn one, and, if need be, discuss it fully over breakfast in the morning."

"You have an uncommonly nice way of slipping out of a difficulty, Dering, I must confess. But it won't wash with me. The moment I find a man's not acting on the square, I brand him before the world as a cheat and a blackleg."

"Your language is very strong, Mr. Osmond."

"Not stronger than the case demands."

"I assure you again, on my word of honour, that you are mistaken in saying that I played with the wrong ball."

"And I assure you, on *my* word of honour, that I am not mistaken."

"Even granting for a moment that, in mistake, I did play the wrong ball, you cannot suppose that I would knowingly attempt to cheat you for the sake of a paltry ten pounds."

"But I can and do suppose it," said Osmond, vehemently. "The fact of your being a rich man has nothing to do with it. I have known a marquis cheat at cards for the sake of half a sovereign. Why shouldn't you try to cheat me out of ten pounds?"

"Your experience of the world, Mr. Osmond, seems to have been a very unfortunate one," said Lionel, coldly.

"Perhaps it has, and perhaps it hasn't," said Osmond, savagely, "Anyhow, it has taught me to be on the look out for rogues."

"Osmond, are you mad, or drunk, or both?" cried Kester.

"A little of both," said Lionel, sternly. "If he were not under my roof, I would horsewhip him till he went down on his knees and proclaimed himself the liar and bully he really is."

Osmond was in the act of lifting a glass of brandy-and-seltzer to his lips as Lionel spoke. He waited, without drinking, till Lionel had done. "You called me a liar, did you?" he said. "Then, take that!" and as he spoke, he flung the remaining contents of the glass into Lionel's face, and sent the glass itself crashing to the other side of the room.

Another instant and Dering's terrible fingers were closed round Osmond's throat. This last insult was more than he could bear. His self-control was flung to the winds. Osmond's nerveless frame quivered and shook helplessly in the strong man's grasp. He was as powerless to help himself as any child would have been. His eyes were starting from his head, and his face beginning to turn livid, when Kester started forward.

"Don't choke him, Li," he said. "Don't kill the beggar quite."

"You mean, contemptible hound!" said Dering, as he loosened his grasp and flung Osmond away: who staggered and fell to the ground, gasping for breath, and hardly knowing for the moment what had befallen him.

With a few wild gasps and a tug or two at his cravat, he seemed to partially recover himself. Raising himself on his left elbow, he put his right hand deep down inside his waistcoat, and from some secret pocket there he drew what looked like a toy pistol, but which was a deadly weapon enough in competent hands. Before either Kester or Lionel knew what he was about, he had taken point-blank aim at the latter, and fired. But drink had made his hand unsteady, and the bullet intended for Lionel's brain passed harmlessly through his hair, and lodged in the panelling behind.

Kester sprang at him, wrenched the pistol from his hand, and flung it to the other end of the room. As he did so, the thought passed through his mind: "If that bullet had only been aimed two inches lower, what a difference it would have made to me!" "Osmond, are you going to turn assassin?" he said. "You must come with me." He helped him up from the ground, took his right arm firmly within his, and led him towards the door.

"That is the way we serve those who insult us out in the west," said Osmond. "Only: for once, I missed my aim. But I'll fight it out with him to-morrow, anyhow he likes."

"To-morrow we will settle our little differences as gentlemen of honour should settle such things," said Kester, soothingly. And with these words he led him from the room.

Lionel sank back on a chair, sick, weary, and disgusted; and so sat without moving till Kester came back, some ten minutes later.

"What have you done with Osmond?" he said.

"I have given him in charge of my man, who won't leave him till he has seen him safely in bed. He would insist on having more brandy. In ten minutes he will be sleeping the sleep of the drunken."

Lionel rose with a look of pain, and pressed one hand to the side of his head.

"Got one of your bad headaches?" asked Kester.

"Yes: about the worst that I ever remember to have had."

"Is there no cure for them?"

"None, but patience."

"But, surely, they may be alleviated?"

"I have tried remedies without end, but to no purpose."

"Will you let me make you up a mixture from a prescription of my own? I have all the materials at hand. If I make it up, will you promise to take it? I don't say that it will cure your headache, but I do believe that it will give you relief."

There was a strangely anxious, almost haggard look on his face as he spoke thus, and yet his eyes were never once bent on Lionel. He had picked up one of the cues, and seemed to be busily examining it. When he had done speaking, he waited for his cousin's answer with parted lips, in a sort of breathless hush.

Lionel laughed a rather dismal laugh.

"Well, if you have any faith in your mixture, I don't mind trying it," he said. "It can't make the pain worse, and there is just a faint chance that it may ease it a bit—or that I may fancy that it does, which is pretty much the same thing."

The cue dropped from Kester's fingers and rattled on the floor. "What was that?" he said, suddenly, looking round with a shiver. "I could have sworn that somebody touched me on the shoulder."

"There is no one here but ourselves," said Lionel, languidly. The pain was almost more than he could bear up against.

Kester recovered his equanimity after an impatient "Pish" at his folly, and the two men went slowly out of the billiard-room together. Outside the door Kester whispered in his cousin's ear, "I will go and fetch the mixture, and be back again in two minutes." Lionel nodded, and Kester was gone.

"Why need he have whispered to me?" asked Lionel of himself. "There was no one to overhear him. There's something queer about him to-night. A little touch of the blues, perhaps; and yet he never seems to drink very hard."

Lionel went off to his rooms—a bedroom and drawing-room en suite, next to the rooms occupied by Osmond. He took off his coat and tie, and unbuttoned his waistcoat, and then sat down with his feet on the fender, waiting for Kester.

Lionel Dering had been troubled with occasional headaches of a very

distressing kind ever since he could remember anything, and he had quite made up his mind that he must be so troubled till the end of the chapter. He had no faith in his cousin's proposed remedy, but he would take it simply to oblige Kester.

Kester was not long away. He entered the room presently, carrying a small silver tankard in his hand.

"I can't tell you how sorry I feel for this night's work," said Lionel.

"What have you done that you should feel sorry for?" asked Kester, as he put down the tankard on the table.

"I ought to have left the billiard-room instead of flying at poor little Osmond in the brutal way I did. He was half drunk to-night, and didn't know what he was about. He would have apologised in the morning, and then everything would have come right."

"Considering the provocation you received, I think that you acted throughout with the greatest forbearance. Osmond, to say the least of it, is not worthy of any serious consideration."

"But you will see him in the morning, won't you, and act as peace-maker between us, if it be possible to do so?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"I do wish it. The brawl was an utterly disreputable piece of business. I ought not to have let my temper overmaster me. I ought, under no circumstances, to have forgotten that Percy Osmond was my guest."

"Well, never mind all that now. We can discuss the affair fully in the morning. See, I have brought you the mixture I spoke of for your head. I think you will find that it will do you good."

He held out the tankard as he spoke. His pale face looked paler than ever to-night—his black moustache blacker than ever; but his restless eyes seemed to fix themselves anywhere rather than on his cousin's face. Lionel took the tankard from Kester's hand, and drank off the contents at a draught. Then he wiped his lips with his pocket-handkerchief, and having no coat on, he stuffed the handkerchief carelessly under his braces for the time being.

"And now I'll leave you to sweet slumber and happy dreams," said Kester, as he took back the empty tankard. "Your head will be better by morning, I do not doubt. Good night."

"Good night," responded Lionel, languidly, from his chair by the fire.

Kester went softly out, and closed the door lightly behind him.

Five minutes passed away, and then Lionel awoke with a start to find that he had unconsciously fallen into a doze over the fire. The pain in his head certainly seemed a little better already. But when he rose to his feet, he found that he could hardly stand. His limbs seemed too weak to support him, and he was overcome with a dull, heavy drowsiness such as he had never felt before. The room and everything in it began to rock slowly up and down like the cabin of a ship at sea.

There were only two candles on the table, but Lionel seemed to see a dozen. Sleep—sleep of the deepest—seemed to be numbing both his heart and his brain. Consciousness was fast leaving him. He staggered rather than walked to the couch on the opposite side of the room. He reached it. He had just sense enough to fling himself on it, and then he remembered nothing more.

He remembered nothing more till he awoke next morning. It was broad daylight when he opened his eyes. He had to gather his wits together and to think for a minute or two before he could call to mind how and why it was that he found himself lying there, on his dressing-room couch, instead of in his bed as usual. Then all the events of the evening flashed across his mind in a moment; the quarrel in the billiard-room; the pistol-shot; the pain in his head; the draught given him by his cousin, and the strange effect it had upon him. "It must have been a very powerful narcotic," said Lionel to himself. "But, at all events, it has cured my headache."

By turning his head he could see the timepiece on the bureau. It was nine o'clock, an hour and a half past his usual time for rising. But, late as it was, he felt a strange disinclination for getting up. He felt as if he could lie there all day without moving. His mind was perfectly clear; the pain had left his head; but his limbs seemed heavy, useless, inert. He would stay there for just ten minutes longer, he said to himself, and then he would positively get up. Kester would be waiting breakfast for him, and he was anxious to know how Osmond was this morning, and what recollection he retained of the fracas overnight.

But Osmond was up already. He could hear him moving about the next room. So far all was well. But what would be the result of their quarrel? Osmond must leave Park Newton, and at once. No other course was—— Now that he listened more particularly, he could hear the footsteps of more than one person in the next room—of more than two—of several. And there were footsteps in the corridor, passing to and fro as if in a hurry. There was a whispering, too, as if close outside his door; then the hurried muttering of many voices in Osmond's room; then the clash of two doors far away in the opposite wing of the house.

What could it all mean? Was Osmond ill? Or was he simply having his luggage packed, with the view of leaving for London by the forenoon train? Lionel sprang to his feet without another moment's delay. The sudden change of position made him dizzy. He pressed his fingers over both his eyes for a moment or two while he recovered himself. Again there was a noise of whispering in the corridor outside. Lionel made a step or two forward towards the door, and then came to a dead stop—horror-stricken by something which he now saw for the first time. The pocket-handkerchief which he had stuffed carelessly under his braces overnight had fallen to the ground when he sprang from the couch. As

he stooped to pick it up, he saw that it was stained with blood. But whose blood? It could not be his own—there was nothing the matter with him. But if not his, whose?

Now that he looked at himself more closely, there were crimson streaks on the front of his shirt where the handkerchief had rested against it—and on his wristbands there were other streaks of the same ominous colour.

He had picked up the handkerchief, and was gazing at it in a sort of maze of dread and perplexity, when there came a sudden imperative knocking at his dressing-room door. Next moment the door was opened, and, lifting up his bewildered eyes, Lionel saw clustered in the doorway the frightened faces of five or six of his own servants.

"What is the matter?" he asked, and his voice sounded strangely unfamiliar both to himself and others.

"Oh, if you please, sir—Mr. Osmond—the gentleman in the next room!" gasped Pearce the butler.

"What is the matter with Mr. Osmond?"

"He has been murdered in the dead of night!"

Lionel caught at the edge of a table for support. His brain reeled—all the pulses of his being seemed to stand still in awful dread.

"Murdered! Percy Osmond murdered!" He breathed the words rather than spoke them aloud. Then for the first time he saw that all those frightened eyes clustered in the doorway were fixed, not on him, but on the terrible token which he was still holding in his hand. He dropped it with a shudder, and strode forward towards the door. They all shrank back as though he were stricken with the plague.

"Great Heaven! they cannot suspect that I have done the deed!" he whispered to himself. "We must see to this at once," he said aloud.

No one spoke. There was a dead, ominous silence. The crimson stains on his shirt were visible, and every eye was now fixed on them. Lionel paused for a moment at the threshold to gather nerve.

As he stood thus, Pierre Janvard came quickly out of Osmond's room, carrying some small article between the thumb and finger of his right hand. His face was paler than usual, and his half-closed eyes had a sort of feline expression in them which was not pleasant to look upon.

"If you please, sir, is this your property?" he said, addressing himself to Lionel, and displaying a small jet stud set in filagree gold.

Lionel's fingers went up instinctively to his shirt front in search of the missing stud.

"Yes, that is my property," he said. "Where did you find it?"

"I found it just now, sir, clutched in the hand of Mr. Percy Osmond, who lies murdered in the next room."

(*To be continued.*)

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AMONG THE RURAL POOR.

THE builder with careful skill fits in the stones which form the arch; but until the keystone is there his work is shapeless and insecure. The artist spreads the rich tints of gold and crimson over the painted windows, but until the sunlight streams through it those hues are cold and dim. Without a strong, deep sense of religion fixed in the very centre of a man's heart and mind, the finest intellectual powers can never be anything but a useless mass of glittering fragments. Unless a clear and reasonable religious belief warms and lights up the daily life, the sweetest natural qualities are but pale and torpid. Yet it is of this mighty keystone, this life-giving ray, that a self-opinionated town-bred minority, thinking exclusively of their own peculiar case, and nothing of the spiritual wants of their poorer brethren in rural districts, would deprive the mass of our common people; and such an act of tyranny is calmly discussed among a nation which boasts of its freedom, and advocated by those who wear on their breasts a specious badge, which they dare to misname the badge of liberty.

This expression, "an act of tyranny," may perhaps at first seem overstrained and unjust; but let any impartial person pay with us a brief visit to a few of the cottages in a Devon or Somerset village, and we think he will own our words are not exaggerated.

When we enter the first house, the light of a November evening is beginning to wane. On the hearth stands the mother of the family, a pale, depressed-looking woman, out of whose face the traces of a brighter intelligence which may have been there in her girlhood have been worn by the constant passing over it of the heavy hand of care, and makes belief of a fire by blowing up a few embers of smouldering turf. By-and-by the children come trotting in from school. They eat their supper, which often enough is nothing but dry bread, and then sit down to shiver in their scanty frocks, and play with a few broken toys, which make us feel rather sad when we think of the gaily painted treasures scattered in such lavish profusion about the nursery floor at home. The mother is very busy with odds and ends of household work; but even while she is busy she often casts uneasy glances towards the door. The minutes drag on, and as she looks up at the clock she is glad to find that it is time to send her little ones off to bed, so that they may escape the ugly sight which she knows too well will soon be here. When first she married, she resolved that if ever a little group of children should stand around her she would send them to rest at night with words of prayer in their hearts and on their lips. That good resolution has long ago been broken down by the force of sin and sorrow. But before the children can move to go, a heavy, unsteady step draws near the door. The mother

trembles and shrinks back; the children look up with half frightened, half curious eyes. Is it a man that enters, or is it a hideous, degraded caricature of humanity? There are rough words and rougher deeds in the cottage that night.

Let us cease our boastful talk about the progress of the age, about the triumphs of intellect, and the march of science, and try to find out some practical way in which to keep drunkenness far from our cottage hearths. Who could be cruel enough to wish to take away from the children that come back to such a home as this, the one little ray of higher light which shines in upon their moral being from half an hour's plain, wholesome religious teaching at school? If the school is secular, and secular only, what is to be expected but that a drunken son will grow up as exact a duplicate of the drunken father as the poisonous flower which flourished this spring is an exact duplicate of the poisonous flower which blossomed on the same stem last year? If the school is secular, and secular only, what is to be expected but that the girl, whose mother has grown partly apathetic to spiritual things from the mere dull, listless wretchedness of her existence, and partly careless of them from constant disuse, will lead, in after years, a prayerless life?

In the next house in which we find ourselves two women are sitting. At first sight all here seems to be going on fairly enough. The dish-covers and stewpans on the wall gleam as brightly as the mirrors in the drawing-room of a duchess. In the tall cupboard with glass doors are enshrined many a choice bit of china. On the little side-table are a few neatly bound books. The elder woman has a plausible respectability of manner which might become the housekeeper at the Squire's. The younger has a pretty face, and the smile with which she greets us does it full justice. Surely, we say, the child who sleeps in the cradle by this hearth will unfold the petals of its heart and its mind in a pure home atmosphere here, and will need no fostering sunbeam outside these walls. But look a little closer. There is no wedding-ring on the hand with which the young mother smooths the cradle-quilt of her little one. Pass by this door to-night when the parson and his family are supposed to be safe within the gates of the vicarage, and we shall hear the old woman's voice raised in shrill tones which are not exactly tones of blessing or of edifying. If the school is secular, and secular only, the tiny daughter now sleeping in the cradle must lose her bes and perhaps her only chance of building up around her a fence of strong principles which may keep her from falling at the first onset of temptation, as her mother has done. If the school is secular, and secular only, the hoary head of this child, should she ever live to attain to it, will probably be, like that of her grandmother, anything but a crown of glory.

Our third visit is to the house of a small farmer; for in our quiet rural districts the children of the small farmer and small tradesman are

generally brought up at the village school side by side with the children of the labourer. Out of doors there is no lack of signs of busy prosperity. A threshing machine is whirring and humming in the yard like a giant cockchafer. The warm linny is sweet with the breath of sleek cows and with fragrant hay. The geese cackle on the pond: the horses rattle their chains merrily as they galop in from the plough. A dog, with self-important barks, folds the bleating sheep. But where is she who was once, as it were, the centre-spring which set in motion all this active machinery of life?

In a darkened room she lies, pale and still as a snowdrop which a rough March wind has torn from the stem. What quiet resignation sits waiting in those half-closed eyes! What an eloquent tale of a life of labour, and a death of long drawn-out suffering, is told by that work-hardened, but now wasted hand! God's minister comes and reads words rich with blessed meaning: but the worn-out body will hardly let the mind heed them. They bring her books in which are written the thoughts of the good and wise, but her heavy eyelids are not raised even to glance at them. They sing, to soothe her, a sweet low hymn, and one in which she used to join of old, but the weakened ear cannot bear the sound. She is no lady, who has been taught by long refined intellectual training to make mind triumph over matter. Her life has been spent in hard manual labour, and the shattered body in these last hours asserts its power over the struggling spirit. All at once there is a sound of little feet on the stairs; a child, so young that she can smile even upon death, comes trotting in proudly to repeat to her mother the text just learnt at school: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you." A light comes into the dying mother's face, for God has sent an angel to her side. If the school was secular, and secular only, could those sweet words of comfort have reached that mother's ear?

These are but a few instances which prove to those who go in and out among the poor in our agricultural districts, that until we can establish a far higher scale of morality in our cottage homes, and that as long as, according to the natural laws of humanity, disease and death visit the dwellings of those who toil as well as of those who think and rest, religious teaching at school is far more necessary for the children of the labouring classes than for those of any other rank in the community. With those who are professed unbelievers, the examples we have given will, of course, have no weight; but with those good men, and we believe that there are good men who, through mistaken reason, advocate entire secular education for the poor, we think that these simple pictures, drawn from daily experience in village life, must have at least some little influence if they would look at the matter impartially. It is to them that we would address ourselves.

We believe that these men, looking at the subject through the medium

of their own liberal education and refined feeling, are little aware how very far from high and clear is still the moral standard in our country people. How much even elementary knowledge they still have to be taught about many things, how wide the gulf still is on many points between them and the classes immediately above them ! It is one thing to sit in a well-furnished library in May Fair or Belgravia and write theoretically about the rural poor, and quite another to go about among them, up and down muddy lanes, from cottage to cottage, sitting by their scantily warmed hearths, listening to the moan of the sickly baby and the rambling tales of the old granny, and learning little by little to know something about their real home trials and temptations. We use the expression learning *little by little* with a strong emphasis ; for there is no class of people in Europe so difficult to grow familiar with as the agricultural labourers of Devon and Somerset. When the lady visitor comes in, the wife wraps herself up in a veil of commonplace civil speeches ; when the squire or clergyman draws near, the husband entrenches himself behind a fence of stolid dulness; and it is only by constant quiet acts of kindliness, by words of sympathy spoken again and again, that we can gradually win our way into their confidence. It is, therefore, very difficult, nay, almost impossible, for anyone who has not lived for some time among them to write or speak truthfully on so vital a point as the education of their children.

No doubt those who advocate a secular education have before their minds' eye the finished picture of an ideal village schoolmaster. He is to be a man of grand broad faith, a true Christian in the highest sense of the term, who, through the very strength and intensity of his own belief, will be able to look with an equal eye on children of every creed, and, though he does not speak to them directly of sacred things, will keep up a religious atmosphere among them. There have been, and no doubt are still, some few such men in the world. Dr. Arnold, even if he had been forbidden to preach to his boys, would have gained over them an influence for good which many of them would have felt throughout their lives. William the Silent, had he been a schoolmaster instead of a prince, would have gone about grandly yet simply among his pupils, moulding their thoughts before they were uttered, and, even if he had not spoken to them of God, would have made the class-room a church. But Arnolds and Williams of Nassau, or rather, we should say, inferior men after their type, are not exactly to be found every day on the benches of an English training college. Our village schoolmaster is in general a very commonplace mortal, who is a little too fond of showing his own self-importance, and getting out of his depth in his talk ; who means well in the main, but is very far from being the calm, philosophical man which he is portrayed to be, no doubt, in the warm imaginations of the apostles of secular school education.

With regard to the nature of religious teaching in our schools, it cannot

be too simple and at the same time too picturesque. We have scant respect for the school where the children say through without a mistake the names of all the kings of Israel and Judah in succession. We smile somewhat disrespectfully when we hear the school inspector set the scholars some such Scripture puzzle as "Who was Zaphnath Paaneah?" But we love to find the little ones at home in the beautiful old Bible stories. We think that such instruction would be given best by a woman, and we should be glad to see the religious department in our village schools entirely made over to the mistress.

The children of our rural poor leave school to go out to work at a very early age. For many reasons this is, of course, to be regretted. It is depressing, in an intellectual point of view, to find the boy who can scarcely write a round hand leading the plough all day; and the girl who can hardly stumble through a page of the "Pilgrim's Progress" kept early and late at the washing-tub. Still, any law forcing the children of the poor to stay at school till a certain age would be, in the present state of things, to some extent, an arbitrary and a harsh one, as far as our rural districts are concerned; for as long as wages remain as they now are in the West of England, and prices as high, it is absolutely necessary that the younger members of a labourer's family should begin as soon as possible to add their mite to the family purse.

It is this fact of the children's going out to work so early which makes us repeat again that the religious teaching in our village schools cannot be too plain and too lively. It must put the Bible before the children so simply that even their just awakening minds cannot fail to take in something of its deep and glorious meaning, and yet, at the same time, so vividly that Jacob's Well and the blue waters of Galilee will stand out before their young imaginations as if they had seen them with their bodily eyes. Such teaching as this will cling about a child's memory almost without his being conscious of it; and as the boy sits in his hut on a rainy day under the hedge keeping off the birds from the newly sown corn (the first work always, on a West Country farm, of the labourer's child), he will go over and over again with delight his school Scripture lessons, and will extract from them a meaning which he failed before to gain. The subject will have been made attractive to him, and his idle mind, wanting employment, will be glad sooner or later to dwell upon it. Much may be done to make up to our village boys and girls for their early leaving school, and to perfect them in their Scripture knowledge, by opening for them Sunday Bible classes. The clergy, whose Sunday work is generally cut out for them, have seldom time or strength for such undertakings; but it is exactly the work for an active, zealous laity, and most of all for ladies who wish to do something more on the Sabbath besides showing their own best bonnets and criticising those of their neighbours.

The teaching of these Bible classes should be much the same as the

religious teaching of the school ; it should be simple, it should be earnest, it should be full of word pictures of Bible scenery, and of Eastern customs, and pointed now and then with homely but striking illustrations. Our village boys and girls and village young men and women (for if the Bible class is popular they will still continue to attend it, even after they are married) like to feel that their teacher treats them as friends, and not as so many receptacles into which so much Scripture knowledge has to be stuffed. A class of this sort is rendered much more effective by the teacher, always before or after his religious instruction, speaking a few familiar words to some of his pupils about their home concerns, or even joining in a short talk with them all on any matter of general interest.

Above all, we must make the teaching of our Bible classes as broad as possible, consistently with soundness. There is nothing which frightens young people, especially very young men, so much as dogma. Let us try, then, to put on our young men and women the whole armour of God ; but be careful, as we do so, not to turn it into a strait-waistcoat. We have dwelt thus for a few sentences on Bible classes, because we think they form an essential part, and one in which the laity can have an active share, of the religious education of the poor, and because we happen to have so much experience in them.

To return, in conclusion, to the village school proper. We cannot understand how any nation can wish the knowledge of the Bible to die out amongst their working classes, as it assuredly will die out, at least in our retired rural districts, if it ceases to be taught the children of our labouring people. A little while ago a diocesan inspector, who, by virtue of his office, inquired more especially into the Bible knowledge of a village school, went through the following strange experiences :

Q. Who was Gamaliel? A. A famous mountain near Tarsus, at the foot of which St. Paul was brought up. Q. Who was Cornelius? A. (with some hesitation). Please, sir, was he not a music man? Inspector (bewilderedly). A music man? A. (given more boldly). Yes, sir ; because, you know, he was one of the Italian band.

This is a story to laugh over, and yet it is one to cry over too. The case was, no doubt, one of peculiarly gross ignorance, but it shows the way in which the tide is setting among our village schools with regard to that book which even infidels allow to be the noblest composition which ever flowed from a human pen.

When the religion of old Rome (Pagan religion though it was) became but a shadow to the mass of the people, the decline of the Roman Empire was not far off. When reason reigned in France instead of Christianity, anarchy reigned with her. Let England take timely warning, and, holding fast by the Book to keep which for her a Sidney fought, and a Latimer died, be great and Christian England still.

ALICE KING.

## THE CRIES IN THE TREES.

WHEN the rumours first began, I can't tell you. They must have had a beginning: but nobody recollected when the beginning was. It was said that curious noises were heard in the neighbourhood of Sandstone Torr. One spoke of it, and another spoke of it, at intervals of perhaps a month apart, until people grew *accustomed* to hear talk of the strange sounds that went shrieking round the Torr on a windy night. Dovey the blacksmith, going up to the Torr on some errand, declared he had heard them at midday: but he was not generally believed.

The Torr was so remote from the ordinary routes of traffic, that the noises were not likely to be heard often, even allowing that there were noises to hear. Shut in by trees and in a lonely spot, people had no occasion to pass it. The narrow lane, by which it was approached from Church Dykely, led to nowhere else; on other sides it was surrounded by fields. Stephen Radcliffe was asked about these noises; but he positively denied having heard any, except those caused by the wind. *That* shrieked around the house as if so many witches were at work, he said, and it always had as long as he could remember. Which was true.

Stephen's inheritance of all the money on the death of his young half-brother Francis—young, compared to him—seemed to have been only the signal for him and his wife to become more unsociable, and they were bad enough before. They shut themselves up in the Torr, with that sister of hers, Eunice Gibbon, who acted as their servant, and saw nobody. Neither visitors nor tradespeople were encouraged there; they preferred to live without help from anybody: butcher or baker or candlestick maker. The produce of the farm supplied ordinary daily needs, and anything else that might be wanted was fetched from the village by Eunice Gibbon—as tall and strapping a woman as Mrs. Stephen, and just as grim and silent. Even the postman had orders to leave any letters that might arrive, addressed to the Torr, at Church Dykely post-office to be called for. Possibly it was a sense of their own unfitness for society that caused them to keep aloof from it. Stephen Radcliffe had always been a sullen, boorish man, in spite of his descent from the ancient Druids—or whatever the high-caste tribes might be, that he traced back from; and as to his wife, she was just as much like a lady as a pig's like a windmill.

The story of the queer noises gained ground, and in the course of rime, it coursed about pretty freely. One evening in the late spring—but the report had been abroad then for months and months—a circumstance caused it to be discussed at Dyke Manor. Giles, our groom, strolling out one night to give himself an airing, chanced to get near the Torr, and came home full of it. "'Twere exactly," he declared, "like

a lot o' witches howling in the air." Just as Stephen Radcliffe had said of the wind. The Squire told Giles it must be the owls; the servants thought Mr. Radcliffe might be giving his wife a beating; Mrs. Todhetley imagined it might be only the bleating of the young lambs. Giles protested it could come from neither owls nor lambs: and as to Radcliffe's beating Becca, he'd be hardly likely to try it on, for she'd beat back again. Tod and I were at school, and heard nothing of it till we got home in summer.

"Johnny! There's the noise!"

We two had been over to the Court to see the Sterlings; it was only the second day of our holidays; and were taking the cross-cut home through the fields, which led us past Sandstone Torr. It was the twilight of a summer's evening. The stars were beginning to show themselves; in the north-west the colours were the most beautiful opal conceivable; the round silver moon sailed in the clear blue sky. Crossing the stile by the grove of trees that on three sides surrounded the Torr, we had reached the middle of the next field, when a kind of faint wailing cry, indescribably painful, brought us both to a standstill.

"It must be the noise they talk of," repeated Tod.

Where did it come from? What was it? Standing on the path in the centre of the open field, we turned about and gazed around; but could see nothing to produce or cause it. It seemed to be overhead, ever so far up in the air: an unearthly, imploring cry, or rather a succession of cries; faint enough, as if the sound spent itself before it reached us, but still distinct; and just as much like what witches might be supposed to make, witches in pain, as any cries could be. I'd have given a month's pocket-money not to have heard it.

"Is it in the Torr?" exclaimed Tod, breaking the silence. "I don't see how that could be, though."

"It is up in the air, Tod."

We stood utterly puzzled; and gazing at the Torr. At as much of it, at least, as could be seen—the tops of the chimneys, and the sugar-loaf of a tower shooting up to its great height amid them. The windows of the house and its old stone walls, on which the lichen vegetated, were hidden by the clustering old trees, in full foliage then.

"Hark! There it is again!"

The same horrible, low, distressing sound, something between a howl and a wail; enough to make a stout man shiver in his shoes.

"Is it a woman's cry, Tod?"

"*I* don't know, lad. It's like a person being murdered and crying out for help."

"Radcliffe can't be tanning his wife."

"Not he, Johnny. She'd take care of that. Besides, they've never been cat-and-dog. Birds of a feather: that's what they are. Oh, by

Jove! there it comes again! Just listen to it! I don't like this at all, Johnny. It must be witches, and nothing else."

Decidedly it must be. It came from the air. The open fields lay around, white and still under the moonlight, and nothing was on their surface of any kind, human or animal. Now again! that awful cry, rising on the bit of breeze there was, and dying away in pain to a faint echo.

"Let us go to the Torr, Johnny, and ask Radcliffe if he hears it!"

We bounded forward under the cry, which rose again and again incessantly; but in nearing the house it seemed to get further off and to be higher than ever in the air. Leaping the gate into the lane, we got to the front door, seized the bell-handle, and pulled at it till somebody came. It was Mrs. Radcliffe; a blue cap and red roses atop of her straggling hair. Holding the candle above her head, she peered at us with her small, sly eyes.

"Oh, is it you, young gentlemen! Do you want anything? Will you walk in?"

I was about to say No, when Tod pushed me aside and strode up the damp stone passage. They did not make enough fires in the house to keep out the damp. As he told me afterwards, he wanted to get in to listen. But there was no sound at all to be heard; the house seemed as still as death. Wherever the cries might come from, it was certainly not from inside the Torr.

"Radcliffe went over to Wire-Piddle this afternoon, and he's not back yet," she said; opening the parlour door when we got to the hall. "Did you want him? You must ha' been in a hurry by the way you worked the bell."

She put the candle down on the table. Her work lay there—a brown woollen stocking about half way knitted.

"There is the most extraordinary noise outside that you ever heard, Mrs. Radcliffe," began Todd, seating himself without ceremony on the old-fashioned mahogany sofa. "It startled us. Did you hear it in here?"

"I have heard no noise at all," she answered quietly, taking up the stocking and beginning to knit standing. "What was it like?"

"An awful shrieking and crying. Not loud; faint enough nearly for dying cries. As it is not in your house—and we did not think it was, or could be—it must be, I should say, in the air."

"Ay," she said, "just so. I can tell you what it is, Mr. Joseph: the night birds."

Tod looked at her, plying the knitting-needles so quickly, and looked at me, and there was a silence. I wondered what was keeping him from speaking. He suddenly bent his head forward.

"Have you heard any talk of these noises, Mrs. Radcliffe? People say they are to be heard almost any night."

"I've not heard no talk, but I have heard the noise," she answered, whisking out a needle and beginning another of the three-cornered rows. "One evening about a month ago I was a coming home up the lane, and I hears a curious kind o' prolonged cry It startled me at the moment, for, thinks I, it must be in this house; and I hastens in. No. Eunice said she had heard no cries: as how should she, when there was nobody but herself in-doors? So I goes out again, and listens," added Mrs. Radcliffe, lifting her eyes from the stocking and fixing them on Tod, "and then I finds out what it really was—the night birds."

"The night birds?" he echoed.

"'Twas the night birds, Mr. Joseph," she repeated, with an emphatic nod. "They had congregated in these here thick trees, and was crying like so many human beings. I have heard the same thing many a time in Wiltshire when I was a girl. I used to go there to stay with aunt and uncle."

"Well, I never heard anything like it before," returned Tod. "It's just as though some unquiet spirit was riding in the air."

"Mayhap it sounds so afore you know what it is. Let me give you young gentlemen a drop o' my homemade cowslip wine."

She had whisked the decanter of wine and some glasses off the sideboard with her long arms, before we could say Yes or No. We are famous for cowslip wine down there, but this was extra good. Tod took another glass of it, and got up to go.

"Don't be frighted if you hear the noise again, now that you know what it is," she said, quite in a motherly way. "For my part I wish some o' the birds was shot. They don't do no good to nobody."

"As there is not any house about here, except this, the thought naturally arises that the noise may be inside it—until you know to the contrary," remarked Tod.

"I wish it was inside it—we'd soon stop it by wringing all their necks," cried she. "You can listen," she added, suddenly going into the hall and flinging wide every door that opened from it and led to the different passages and rooms. "Go along to any part of the house you like, and hearken for yourselves, young gentlemen."

Tod laughed at the suggestion. The passages were all still and cold, and there was nothing to hear. Taking up the candle, she lighted us to the front door. Outside stood the woman-servant Eunice, a basket on her arm, and just about to ring. Mrs. Radcliffe enquired if she had heard any noise.

"Only them shrieking birds up there," she answered readily. "They be in full cry to-night."

"They've been a startling these gentlemen finely."

"There bain't nothing to be startled at," said the woman, roughly, turning a look of contempt upon us. "If I was the master I'd shoot

as many as I could get at; and if that didn't get rid of 'em, I'd cut the trees down."

"They make a queerer noise than any birds I ever heard before," said Tod, standing his ground to say it.

"They does," assented the woman. "That queer, that some folks believes it's the shrieks o' the skeleton on the gibbet."

Pleasant! When I and Tod had to pass within a few yards of its corner. The posts of the old gibbet were there still, but the skeleton had mouldered away long ago. A bit of chain, some few inches long, adhered to its fastening in the post still, and rattled away on windy nights.

"What donkeys we were, Johnny, not to know birds' cries when we heard them!" exclaimed Tod, as we tumbled over the gate and went flying across the field. "Hark! Listen! There it is again!"

There it was. The same despairing kind of wail, faintly rising and dying on the air. Tod stood in hushed silence.

"Johnny, I believe that's a human cry!—I could almost fancy," he went on, "that it is speaking words. No bird, that ever I met with, native or foreign, could make the like."

It died away. But still occurred the obvious question, What was it, and whence did it come? With nothing but the empty air above and around us, that was difficult to answer.

"It's not in the trees—I vow it," said Tod; "it's not inside the Torr; it can't rise up from under the ground. I say, Johnny, is it a case of ghost?"

The wailing arose again as he spoke, as if to reprove him for his levity. I'd rather have met a ghost; ay, and a real ghost; than have carried away that sound to haunt me.

We tore home as fast as our good heels could take us, and told of the night's adventure. After the Pater had blown us up for being late, he treated us to a dose of ridicule. Human cries, indeed? Ghosts and witches? I might be excused, he said, being a muff; but Joe must be just going back to his childhood. That settled Tod. Of all disagreeable things he most hated to be ridiculed.

"It must have been the old birds in those trees, after all, Johnny," said he, as we went up to bed. "I think the moon makes people fanciful."

And after a sound night's rest we woke up to the bright sunshine, and thought no more of the cries.

That morning, being close to Pitchley's farm, we called in to see Mrs. Frank Radcliffe. But she was not to be seen. Her brother, David Skate, just come in to his midday dinner, came forward to meet us in his fustian suit. Annet had been hardly able to keep about for some time, he said, but this was the first day she had regularly broken down so as to be in bed.

"It has brought on a touch of fever," said he, pressing the bread-and-cheese and cider upon us, which he had ordered in.

"What has?" asked Tod.

"This perpetual torment that she keeps her mind in. But she can't help it, poor thing, so it's not fair to blame her," added David Skate. "It gets worse instead of better, and I don't see what the end of it is to be. I've thought for some time she might go and break up to-day."

"Why to-day?"

"Because it is the anniversary of her husband's death, Master Johnny. He died twelve months ago to-day."

Back went my memory to the morning we heard of it. When the Pater was scolding Dwarf Giles in the yard, and Tod stood laughing at the young ducks taking to the water, and Stephen Radcliffe loomed into sight, grim and surly, to disclose to us the tidings that the post had brought in—his brother Frank's death.

"Has she still got that curious fancy in her, David?—that he did not come by his death fairly."

"She's got it in her, and she can't get it out of her," returned David. "Why, Master Johnny, it's nothing but that that's killing her. Ay, and that's not too strong a word, sir, for I do believe she'll die of it, unless something can be done to satisfy her mind, and give her rest," he added earnestly. "She thinks there was foul play used in some way, and that Stephen Radcliffe was at the bottom of it."

We had never heard a word about the fancy since that night when Annet first spoke of it at the stile, and supposed she had forgotten it long ago. The Squire and Mrs. Todhetley had often noticed how ill she looked, but they put it down to grief for Francis and to her anxiety about the farm.

"No, she has said no more since then," observed David. "She took up an idea that the Squire ascribed it to a wandering brain; and so has held her peace since."

"Is her brain wandering, do you think?" asked Tod.

"Well, I don't know," returned David, absently making little cuts at the edge of the cheese with the knife. "In all other respects she is as sane as sane can be; there's not a woman of sounder sense, as to daily matters, anywhere. But this odd fancy has got hold of her mind; and it's just driving her crazy. She says that her husband appears to her in her dreams, and calls upon her to help and release him."

"Release him from what?—From his grave in Finchley Cemetery."

"From what indeed!" echoed David Skate. "That's what I ask her. But she persists that, sleeping or waking, his spirit is always hovering near her, crying out to her to avenge him. She declares that it is no fancy. Of course it is, though."

"I never met with such a case," said Tod, forgetting the good cider in his astonishment. "Frank Radcliffe died up at Dr. Dale's in

London. Stephen could not have had anything to do with his death: he was down here at the time.

"Well, Annet has got the notion firmly fixed in her mind that he had, and there's no turning her," said David. "There will be no turning her on this side the grave, unless we can get her freed from it. Any way, the fancy has come to such a pitch now and is telling upon her so seriously, that something must be done. If it were not that just the busiest time has set in; the hay cut, and the wheat a'most ready to cut, I'd take her to London to Dr. Dale's. Perhaps if she heard the account of Frank's death from his own lips, and that it was a natural death, it might help her a bit."

We went home full of this. The Squire was in a fine way when he heard it, and brimming-over with pity for Annet. He had got to like her; and he had always looked on Francis as in some degree belonging to him.

"Look here," said he, in his impulsive good nature, "it will never do to let this go on: we shall have her in a mad-house too. That's not a bad notion of David Skate's; and if he can't leave to take her up to London just now, I'll take her."

"She could not go," said Tod. "She is in bed with low fever."

"Then I'll go up by myself," stamped the Squire in his zeal. "And get Dr. Dale to write out all the particulars, and hurry down again with them to her as fast as the train will bring me. Poor thing! her disease must be a kind of mania."

"Now, Johnny, mind you don't make a mistake in the omnibus. Use your eyes; they are younger than mine."

We were standing at Charing Cross in the hot afternoon sun, looking out for an omnibus that would take us westward. The Squire had lost no time in starting for London, and we had reached it an hour before. He let me come up with him, as Tod had gone to Whitney Hall.

"Here it is, sir. 'Kensington,—Hammersmith,—Richmond.' This is the right one."

The omnibus stopped, and in we got; for the Squire said the sun was too fierce for the outside; and by-and-by, when the houses became fewer, and the trees and fields thicker, we were set down near Dr. Dale's. A large house, standing amid a huge grass-plat, shut in by iron gates.

"I want to see Dr. Dale," said the Pater, bustling in as soon as the door was opened, without waiting to be asked.

The servant looked at him and then at me; as if he thought the one or the other of us was a lunatic about to be left there. "This way, sir," said he to the Squire: and put us into a small square room that had a blue and drab carpet, and a stand of plants before the window. A

little man, with deep-set dark eyes, and the hair all gone from the top of his head, soon made his appearance—Dr. Dale.

The Squire plunged into explanations in his usual confusing fashion, mixing up many things together. Dr. Dale knitted his brow, trying to make sense of it.

"I'm sure I should be happy to oblige you in any way," said he—and he seemed to be a very pleasant man. "But I do not quite understand what it is you ask of me."

"Such a dreadful thing, you know, if she has to be put in a madhouse too!" went on the Pater. "A pretty, anxious, hard-working little woman she is, as ever you saw, Dr. Dale! We think the account in your handwriting might ease her. I hope you'll not mind the trouble."

"The account of what?" asked the Doctor.

"Only this," explained the Squire, laying hold, in his zeal, of the Doctor's button-hole. "Just dot down the particulars of Francis Radcliffe's death. His death here, you know. I suppose you were an eye-witness to it."

"But, my good sir, I—pardon me,—I must repeat that I do not understand. Francis Radcliffe did not die here. He went away a twelvemonth ago, cured."

"Goodness bless me!" cried the Squire, staggering back to a chair when he had fully taken in the sense of the words, and staring about him like a real maniac. "It cannot be. I must have come to the wrong place."

"This is Dale House, and I am Dr. Dale. Mr. Francis Radcliffe was under my charge for some months: I can't tell exactly how many without referring to my books; seven or eight, I think; and he then left, cured, or nearly so."

"Johnny, hand me my handkerchief; it's in my hat. I can't make top or tail of this."

"I did not advise his removal," continued Dr. Dale, who, I do believe, thought the Squire was bad enough for a patient. "He was very nearly, if not quite well, but another month here would have contributed to establish his recovery on a sure basis. However, his brother insisted on removing him, and I had no power to prevent it."

"What brother?" cried the Squire, rubbing his head helplessly.

"Mr. Radcliffe, of Sandstone Torr."

"Johnny, I think we must all be dreaming. Radcliffe of the Torr got a letter from you one morning, Doctor—in June, I think; yes, I remember the hay-making was about—saying Francis had died; here in this house, with you: and bidding him come up to see you about it."

"I never wrote any such letter. Francis Radcliffe did not die here."

"Well, it was written for you by one of your people. Not die!

Why, you held a coroner's inquest on him ! You buried him in Finchley Cemetery."

"Nothing of the sort, Mr. Todhetley. Francis Radcliffe was taken from this house, by his brother, last June, alive and well."

"Well I never !—this beats everything. Was he not worn away to a skeleton before he went ?—had he not heart disease ?—did he not die of effusion on the brain ? " ran on the Squire, in a maze of bewilderment.

"He was thin certainly : patients in asylums mostly are ; but he could not be called a skeleton. I never knew that he had heart disease. As to dying, he most assuredly did not die here."

"I do think I must be lost," cried the Squire. "I can't find any way out of this. Can you let me see Mr. Pitt, your head assistant, Doctor? Perhaps he can throw some light on it. It was Pitt who wrote the letter to Mr. Radcliffe."

"You should see him with pleasure if he were still with me," replied the Doctor. "But he has left."

"And Frank did not die here !" commented the Squire. "What can be the meaning of it ? "

The meaning was evidently not to be found there. Dr. Dale said he could tell us no more than he had told, if he talked till night—that Francis Radcliffe was taken out by his brother. Stephen paid all charges at the time, and they went away together.

"And of course, Johnny, he is to be believed," quoth the Pater, turning himself round and round on the grass-plot as we were going away, like a tee-totum. "Dale would not deceive us : he could have no object in doing that. What in the world does it all mean ?—and where *is* Francis ? Ste Radcliffe can't have shipped him off to Canada with the wheelbarrows !"

How the Squire whirled straight off to the train, finding one on the point of starting, and got down home again, there's no space to tell of. It was between eight and nine, as the station clock told him, but he was in too much excitement to let the matter rest.

"Come along, Johnny. I'll have it out with Stephen before I sleep."

And they had it out in that same gloomy parlour at the Torr, where Todd and I had been a night or two before ; frightfully gloomy to-night, for the dusk was drawing on, and hardly a bit of light came in. The Squire and Stephen, sitting opposite each other, could not see the outline of one another's faces. Ste brazened it out.

"You be making a hullabaloo for nothing," said he, doggedly. "No, it's true he didn't die at the mad-house ; he died within a week of coming out of it. Why didn't I tell the truth about it ? Why, because I knew I should get a heap o' blame throwed back at me for taking him out—and I wished I hadn't took him out ; but 'twas no good wishing then.

How was I to know that the very self-same hour he'd got his liberty, he would begin drinking again ?—and drink himself into a furious fever, and die of it ? Could I bring him to life again, do you suppose ? "

"What was the meaning of that letter you brought to me, purporting to come from Dr. Dale ? Answer that, Stephen Radcliffe."

"I didn't bring you a letter from Dr. Dale. 'Twas from Pitt ; Dr. Dale's head man. You read it yourself. When I found that Frank was getting unmanageable at the lodgings, I sent to Pitt, asking if he'd be good enough to come and see to him—I knew no other doctor up there ; and Pitt was the best I could have, as he understood his case. Pitt came and took the charge ; and I left Frank under him. I couldn't afford to stay up there, with my grass a-waiting to be cut, and all the fine weather a-wasting itself away. Pitt stayed with him ; and he died in Pitt's arms ; and it was Pitt that wrote the letter to tell me of it. You should ha' gone up with me, Squire," added Stephen, with a kind of sneer, "and then you'd have seen where he was for yourself, and knowed as much as I did."

"It was an infamous deceit to put upon me, Stephen Radcliffe."

"It did no harm. The deceit only lay in letting you think he died in the mad-house instead of out of it. If I'd not thought he was well enough to come out, I shouldn't have moved him. 'Twas his fault," sullenly added Stephen. "He prayed me to take him away from the place ; not to go away without him."

"And where was it that he did die."

"At my lodgings."

"What lodgings ?"

"The lodgings I stayed at while I was shipping off the things to Tom. I took Frank there, intending to bring him down home with me when I came, and surprise you all. Before I could come he had got the drink into him, and was as mad again as a March hare. Pitt had to strap him down to his bed."

"Are you sure you did not ship him off to Tom also, while you were shipping the things ?" demanded the Squire. "I believe you are crafty enough for it, Stephen Radcliffe,—and unbrotherly enough."

"If I'd shipped him off, he could have shipped himself back again, I take it," returned Stephen, coolly.

"Where are these lodgings that he died at ?"

"In London."

"Whereabouts in London ? I didn't suppose they were in New York."

"'Twas near Cow Cross."

"Cow Cross ! Where in the name of wonder is Cow Cross ?"

"It's towards Smithfield. Islington way."

"You give me the address, Stephen Radcliffe. I insist upon knowing it. Johnny, you can see—take it down. If I dont verify this matter

to my satisfaction, Mr. Radcliffe, I'll have you up publicly to answer for it."

Stephen took an old pocket-book out of his coat, went to the window to catch what little light came in, and ran his finger down the leaves.

"Gibraltar Terrace, Islington district," read he. "That was all the address I ever knew it by."

"Gibraltar Terrace, Islington district," repeated the Pater. "Take it down, Johnny—here's the back of an old letter. And now, Mr. Radcliffe, will you go with me to London?"

"No. I'll be hanged if I do."

"I mean to come to the top and bottom of this, I can tell you. You sha'n't play these tricks on honest people with impunity."

"Why, what do you suspect?" roared Stephen. "Do you think I murdered him?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you did," retorted the Pater. "Find out a man in one lie, and you may suspect him of others. What was the name of the people, at these lodgings?"

Stephen Radcliffe, sitting down again, put his hands on his knees, apparently considering; but I saw him take an outward glance at the Squire from underneath his grey eyebrows—very grey and bushy they were now. He could see that for once in his life the Pater was resolute.

"Her name was Mapping," he said. "A widow. Mrs. Mapping."

"Put that down, Johnny. 'Mrs. Mapping, Gibraltar Terrace, Islington district.' And now, Mr. Radcliffe, where is Pitt to be found?—He has left Dale House."

"In the moon, for aught I can tell," was the insolent answer. "I paid him for his attendance when we came back from the funeral—and precious high his charges were!—and I know nothing of him since."

We said good-night to Stephen Radcliffe with as much civility as could be called up under the circumstances, and went home in the fly. The next day we steamed up to London again to make enquiries at Gibraltar Terrace. It was not that the Squire exactly doubted Stephen's word, or for a moment thought that he had dealt unfairly by Frank: nothing of that: but he was in a state of explosive passion at the deceit Stephen Radcliffe had practised on him; and needed to throw the passion off. Don't we all know how unbearable inaction is in such a frame of mind?

Well. Up one street, down another, went we, in what Stephen had called the Islington district, but no Gibraltar Terrace could we see or hear of. The terrace might have been in Gibraltar itself, for all the sign there was of it.

"I'll go down to-morrow, and issue a warrant against Ste Radcliffe," cried the Squire, when we got in, tired and heated, to the Castle and

Falcon—at which inn, being convenient to the search, he had put up. "I will, Johnny, as I'm a living man. It is infamous to send us up here on a wild-goose chase, to a place that has no name, and no existence. I don't like the aspect of things at all; and he shall be made explain them."

"But, I suppose we have not looked in all parts of Islington," I said. "It seems a large place. And—don't you think, sir—that it might be as well to ascertain where Pitt is. I daresay Dr. Dale knows."

"Perhaps it would, Johnny."

"Pitt would be able to testify to the truth of what Stephen Radcliffe says. We might hear it all from him."

"And need not bother further about this confounded Gibraltar Terrace. The thought did not strike me before, Johnny. We'll go up to Dale's the first thing after breakfast."

The Squire chartered a cab: he was in too much of a fever to look out for an omnibus: and by ten o'clock Dr. Dale's was reached. The Doctor was not at home, but we saw some one that the servant called Mr. Lichfield.

"Pitt?" said Mr. Lichfield—who was a tall, strong young man in a tweed suit of clothes, and had black hair parted down the middle—"Oh, he was my predecessor here. He has left."

"Where's he gone?" asked the Squire.

"I don't know, I'm sure. Dr. Dale does not know; for I have once or twice heard him wonder what had become of Pitt. Pitt got rather irregular in his habits, I fancy, and the Doctor discharged him."

"How long ago?"

"About a year, I think. I have not the least idea where Pitt is now: would be happy to tell you if I knew."

So, there we were again—baffled. The Squire went back in the cab to the Castle and Falcon, rubbing his face furiously, and giving things in general a few hard words.

Up to Islington again, and searching up and down the streets and roads. A bright thought took the Pater. He got a policeman to show him to the district sorting-house, went in, and enquired whether such a place as Gibraltar Terrace existed, or whether it did not.

Yes. There was one. But it was not in Islington; only on the borders of it.

Away we went, after getting the right direction, and found it. A terrace of poor houses, in a quiet side street. In nearly every other window hung a card with "Lodgings" on it, or "Apartments." Children played in the road: two men with a truck were crying mackerel.

"I say, Johnny, these houses all look alike. What is the number we want?"

"Stephen Radcliffe did not give any number."

"Bless my heart! We shall have to knock at every one of them."

And so he did. Every individual door he knocked at, one after the other, asking if Mrs. Mapping lived there. At the very last house of all we found her. A girl, whose clothes were dilapidated enough to have come down from Noah's Ark, got up from her knees, on which she was cleaning the flat door-flag, and told us to go into the parlour while she called Mrs. Mapping. It was a tidy threadbare room, not much bigger than a closet, with "Lodgings" wafered to the middle pane of the window.

Mrs. Mapping came in: a middle-aged, washed-out lady, with pink cheeks, and who looked as if she didn't have enough to eat. She thought we had come after the lodgings, and stood curtseying, and rubbing her hands down her black-silk apron—which was in slits. Apparently a "genteel" person who had seen better days. The Squire opened the ball, and her face took a puzzled look as she listened.

"Radcliffe?—Radcliffe?" No, she did not recollect any lodger of the name. But then, nine times out of ten, she did not know the names of her lodgers. She didn't want to know them. Why should she? If the gentlemen's names came out incidental, well and good; if not, she never presumed to enquire after them. She had not been obliged to let lodgings always.

"But this gentleman died here, *died*, ma'am," interrupted the Squire, pretty nearly beside himself with impatience. "It's about twelve months ago."

"Oh, that gentleman," she said. "Yes, he did die here, poor young man. The doctor—yes, his name was Pitt, sir—he couldn't save him. 'Twas drink that was the cause, I'm afeard."

The Squire groaned—wishing all drink was at the bottom of the Thames. "And he was buried in Finchley Cemetery, ma'am, we hear?"

"Finchley? Well, now yes, I believe it was Finchley, sir," replied Mrs. Mapping, considering—and I could see the woman was speaking the truth according to her recollection. "The burial fees are low at Finchley, sir."

"Then he did die here, ma'am—Mr. Francis Radcliffe?"

"Sure enough he did, sir. And a sad thing it was, one young like him. But whether his name was Radcliffe, or not, I couldn't take upon myself to say. I don't remember to have heard his name."

"Couldn't you have read it on the coffin-plate?" asked the Squire, explosively. "One might have thought if you heard it in no other way, you'd see it there."

"Well, sir, I was ill myself at the time, and in a good deal of trouble beside, and didn't get upstairs much out of my kitchen below. Like enough it was Radcliffe: I can't remember."

"His brother brought him—and lodged here with him—did he not?"

"Like enough, sir," she repeated. "There was two or three of 'em out and in often, I remember. Mr. Pitt, and others. I was that ill, myself, that some days I never got out of bed at all. I know it was a fine shock to me when my sister came down and said the young man was dead. She was seeing to things a bit for me during my illness. His rantings had been pitiful."

"Could I see your sister, ma'am?" asked the Squire.

"She's gone to Manchester, sir. Her husband has got a place there now."

"Don't you recollect the elder Mr. Radcliffe?" pursued the Squire. "The young man's brother? He was staying up in London two or three times about some shipping."

"I should if I saw him, sir, no doubt. Last year I had rare good luck with my rooms, never hardly had 'em empty. The young man who died had the first floor apartments.—Well, yes, I do remember now that some gentleman was here two or three times from the country. A farmer, I think he was. A middle-aged man, sir, so to say; fifty, or thereabouts; with grey hair."

"That's him," interrupted the Squire, forgetting his grammar in his haste. "Should know the description of him anywhere, shouldn't we, Johnny? Was he here at the time of the young man's death, ma'am?"

"No, sir. I remember as much as that. He had gone back to the country."

Mrs. Mapping stood, smoothing down the apron, waiting to hear what we wanted next, and perhaps not comprehending the drift of the visit yet.

"Where's that Mr. Pitt to be found?"

"Law, sir! as if I knew!" she exclaimed. "I've never set eyes on him since that time. He didn't live here, sir; only used to come in and out to see to the sick young man. I never heard where he did live."

There was nothing more to wait for. The Squire slipped half a crown into the woman's hand as we went out, and she curtseyed again and thanked him—in spite of the better days. Another question occurred to him.

"I suppose the young man had evērything done for him that could be? Care?—and nourishment?—and necessary attendance?"

"Surely, sir. Why not? Mr. Pitt took care of that, I suppose."

"Ay. Well, it was a grievous end. Good morning, ma'am."

"Good day to you, gentlemen."

The Squire went looming up the street in the dumps; his hands in his pockets, his steps slow.

"I suppose, Johnny, if one tried to get at Pitt in this vast London city, it would be like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay."

"We have no clue to him, sir."

"No. And I don't know that it would answer any purpose if we did get at him. He could but confirm what we've heard. Well, this is fine news to take back to poor Annet Radcliffe!"

"I should think she had better not be told, sir."

"She must know it sometime."

The Squire sent for David Skate when we got home, and told him what we knew; and the two marched to the Torr in the blazing June sun, and held an interview with Stephen Radcliffe. Ste was sullen and reserved, and (for him) haughty. It was a mistake, of course, as things turned out, his having taken Frank from the asylum, he admitted that, admitted he was sorry for it, but he had done it for the best. Frank got drinking again, and it was too much for him; he died after a few days of delirium, and Pitt couldn't save him. That was the long and the short of the history; and the Squire and Skate might make the best and the worst of it.

The Squire and Skate were two of the simplest of men; honest-minded themselves, and unsuspicious of other people. They quitted the Torr for the blazing meadows, on their road home again.

"I shall not say anything about this to Annet," observed David Skate. "In her present frame of mind it would not do. The fever seems better, and she is up, and about her work again. Later perhaps we may tell her of it."

"I wish we could have found Pitt," said the Squire.

"Yes, it would be satisfactory to hear what he has to say," replied David. "Some of these days, when work is slack, I'll take a run up to London and try and search him out. Though I suppose he could not tell us much more than the landlady has told."

"There it is," cried the Squire. "Even Johnny Ludlow, with his crotchets about people and his likes and dislikes, says he's sure Mrs. Mapping might be trusted; that she was speaking to facts."

So matters subsided, and the weeks and our holidays went on together. Stephen Radcliffe, by this act of deceit, added another crooked feather to his cap of ills in the estimation of the neighbourhood; though that would not be likely to trouble him. Meeting Mr. Brandon one day in the road, just out of Church Dykely, Stephen chanced to say that he wished to goodness it was in his power to sell the Torr, so that he might be off to Canada to his son: *that* was the land to make money at, by all accounts.

"You and your son might cut off the entail, now poor Francis is gone," said old Brandon, thinking what a good riddance it would be if Stephen went.

"I don't know who'd buy it—at my price," growled Stephen. "I mean to get shut o' them birds, though," he added, as an afterthought. "*They* bain't entailed. They've never cried and shrieked as they do

this summer. I'd as soon have an army of squalling cats around the place."

"The noise is getting to be a subject of common talk," said old Brandon.

Ste Radcliffe bit his lips and turned his face another way, and emitted sundry daggers from his looks. "Let folks concern themselves with their own business," said he. "The birds is nothing to them."

Four weeks had gone by, and the moon was nearly at the full again. It's light streamed on the hedges, and flickered amid the waving trees, and lay on the fields like pale silver. It was Sunday evening, and we had run out for a stroll before supper, Tod and I.

On coming out of church, Duffham had chanced to get talking of the cries. He had heard them the previous night. They gave him the shivers, he said, they were so like human cries. This put it into our heads to go again ourselves, which we had not done since that first time. How curiously events are brought about!

Leaping the last style, the Torr was right before us at the opposite side of the large field, the tops of its chimneys and its towering sugar-loaf of a tower showing out white in the moonlight. The wind was high, blowing in gusts from the south-west.

"I say, Johnny, it's just the night for witches. Whirr! how it sweeps along! They'll ride swimmingly on their broomsticks."

"The wind must have got up suddenly," I answered. "There was none to-day. It was too hot for it. Talking of witches and broomsticks, Tod, have you read ——"

He put his arm across me to stop my words and steps, halting himself. We had been rushing on like six, had traversed half the field.

"What's that, Johnny?" he asked in a whisper. "There"—pointing onwards at right angles. "Something's lying there."

Something undoubtedly was—lying on the grass. Was it an animal?—or a man? It did not look much like either. We stood motionless, trying to make the shape out.

"Tod! It is a woman."

"Gently, lad! Don't be in a hurry. We'll soon see."

The figure raised itself as we approached, and stood confronting us. The last puff of wind that went brushing by might have brushed me down, in my surprise. It was Mrs. Francis Radcliffe.

She drew her grey cloak closer round her and put her hand upon Tod's arm. He went back half a step: I'm not sure but he thought it might be her ghost.

"Do not deem me quite out of my mind," she said—and her voice and manner were both collected. "I have come here every evening for nearly a week past to listen to the cries. They have never been so plain as they are to-night. I suppose the wind helps them."

"But—you—were lying on the grass, Mrs. Francis," said Tod; not knowing yet what to make of it all.

"I had put my ear on the ground, wondering whether I might not hear it plainer," she replied. "Hark! Listen!"

The cry again! The same painful wailing sound that we heard that other night, making one think of I know not what woe and despair. When it had died away, she spoke further, her voice very low.

"People are talking so much about the cries that I strolled on here some evenings ago to hear them for myself. In my mind's tumult I can hardly rest quiet, once my day's work is done: what does it matter which way I stroll?—all ways are the same to me. Some people said the sounds came from the birds, some said from witches, some from the ghost of the man on the gibbet: but the very first night I came here I found out what they were really like—my husband's cries."

"What!" cried Tod.

"And I believe from my very soul that it is his spirit that cries!" she went on, her voice taking as much excitement as any voice, only half raised, can take. "His spirit is unable to rest. It is here, hovering about the Torr.—Hush! there it comes again."

It was anything but agreeable, I can assure you, to stand in that big white moonlight plain, listening to those mysterious cries and to these ghostly suggestions. Tod was listening with all his ears.

"They are the very cries he used to make in his illness at the farm," said Mrs. Radcliffe. "I can't forget *them*. I should know them anywhere. The same sound of voice, the same wail of anguish: I could almost fancy that I hear the words. Listen."

It did seem like it. One might have fancied that his name was repeated with a cry for help. "Help! Frank Radcliffe! Help!" But at such a moment as this, when the nerves are strung up to concert pitch, the imagination plays us all sorts of impossible tricks.

"I'll be shot if it's not like Frank Radcliffe's voice!" exclaimed Tod, breaking the silence. "And calling out, too."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Francis. "I shall not be able to bear this long: I shall have to speak of it to the world. When I say that you have recognised his voice also, they will be less likely to mock at me as a lunatic. David did, when I told him. At least, I could make no manner of impression on him."

Tod was lying down with his ear to the ground. But he soon got up, saying he could not hear so well.

"Did Stephen kill him, do you think?" she asked, in a dread whisper, drawing closer to us. "Why, else, should his poor unquiet spirit haunt the region of the Torr?"

"It is the first time I ever heard of spirits calling out in a human voice," said Tod. "The popular belief is, that they mostly appear in dumb show."

He quitted us, as he spoke, and went about the field with slow steps, halting often to look and listen. The trees around the Torr in particular seemed to attract his attention, by the length of time he stared up at them. Or, perhaps, it might be at the tops of the chimneys: or perhaps at the tapering tower. We waited in nearly the same spot, shivering and listening. But the sounds never came so distinctly again: I think the wind had spent itself.

"It is a dreadful weight to have to carry about with me," said poor Annet Radcliffe as we walked homewards. "And oh! what will be the ending? Will it be heard always?"

I had never seen Tod so thoughtful as he was that night. At supper he put down his knife and fork perpetually to fall into a brown study; and I am sure he never knew a word of the reading afterwards.

It was some time in the night, and I was fast asleep and dreaming of daws and magpies, when something shook my shoulder and awoke me. There stood Tod, his nightshirt white as snow in the moonlight.

"Johnny," said he, "I have been trying to get daylight out of that mystery, and I think I've done it."

"What mystery? What's the matter?"

"The mystery of the cries. They don't come from Francis Radcliffe's ghost but from Francis himself. His ghost! When that poor soft creature was talking of the ghost, I should have split with laughter but for her distress."

"From Francis himself! What on earth do you mean?"

"Stephen has got him shut up in that tower."

"Alive?"

"Alive! Go along, Johnny! You don't suppose he'd keep him there if he were dead. Those cries we heard to-night were human cries; words; and that was a human voice uttering them, as my ears and senses told me; and my brain has been in a muddle ever since, all sleep gone clean out of it. Just now, turning and twisting possibilities about, the solution of the mystery flashed over me like a gleam of lightning. Ste has got Frank shut up in the Torr.

He, standing there upright by the bed, and I, digging my elbow into the counterpane and resting my cheek on my hand, gazed at one another, the perplexity of our faces showing out strongly in the moonlight.

And I am just as sorry as you can be that the ending cannot be got in, for I as good as promised to finish it. But the magazine will not give me more space, you see, and it must wait until next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

## THE RHINE!

THE glorious Rhine!
I stood and let its wavelets kiss my feet:
Rippling, and bright, and cool, and oh, so sweet;
What happiness was mine!
To stand and gaze in rapture through the day,
To cast all other thoughts and dreams away,
Save this alone—the Rhine!

A strange, deep thrill
Of bliss I felt, and wonder at His love,
Who made the world so fair, and from above
Looks down in blessing still.
My heart, and mind, and soul to Him were bow'd
In gratitude, as on the river flowed,
Obedient to His will.

The corn-fields sweet
Fill all the air with tender, rustling sound,
Intoxicating fragrance breathes around,
The happy sense to greet;
While dotted here and there in rich outspread,
The scarlet poppy rears its sun-born head:
Truly an off'ring meet.

And large-leaved vine,
Now trailing close to earth in modesty,
Now growing upwards, upwards to the sky,
Its fruitful branches twine.
And honest, sun-burned labourers of the soil,
Beneath its welcome shade rest from their toil
In dreams of corn and wine.

From lofty throne
Looks down in haughty pride the castl'd peak
Of Drachenfels, as if it fain would speak
Of wondrous exploits done.
Deep-hidden in its mighty, rocky breast,
The sweet-voiced echo dwells, though now at rest
Its music-ringing tone.

Onward I went,
At every step new beauties met my gaze;
O'erwhelmed, at length, I saw as through a maze
Of glad bewilderment;
Through groves of apricot and orange trees,
Laden with fruit and blossom, on the breeze,
Mingling in gracious scent.

How are they blest
Who live to call this Rhineland home!
I pray no strife or turmoil near may come
To break its peaceful rest!
While from afar, in mem'ry's faithful fold,
I worship still, till I again behold,
Rhine's sunny, gleaming breast!

# WAITING FOR THE CARS.

BY AN AMERICAN LADY.

SUDDENLY the conductor enters, and in a stern voice exclaims, "Passengers for 'so and so' will change cars here." "Why, where are we?" says one. "What for?" cry a dozen. But no answer comes, and no time is given to put on overcoats, or cloaks, or shoes. We are landed in the mud, in the dusk of the evening; the train whizzes past, and we are left.

About twenty persons had alighted, and there we stood, holding what little personal property we had, the rain pouring down upon us, and looking out in the darkness for the cars we were to change into. But we could see no cars: none were there: what was to become of us on that miserable night. Presently a voice of authority was heard.

"If the passengers will walk into the depôt they will be more comfortable. The next train will not be along for an hour yet." Sure enough, there was a station-house behind us, consisting of one room Gladly we entered the little building, and for once forgot to laugh at the darkly painted little zigzag-corniced depôt, all finished off so nicely on the outside, as they all are, and so devoid of all comfort within.

Our company nearly filled the room; and, strangers as we all were to each other, we were a very silent company for some time. Indeed, we had not yet recovered from our surprise.

Two or three young mothers with children, four gentlemen with their wives, one old lady with two tall sons, or, I would say, two tall sons with their mother, three or four "lone, lorn women," who might be maids, wives, or widows, one unmistakable old maid, and the others lone men, who looked disconsolate enough to be old bachelors. This was our company. The room was so dimly lighted that we looked like spectres standing grim and speechless, only waiting for the cock to crow to set us free. The stove smoked; and no wonder, stuffed as it was with wet wood. The rain came down in a torrent, and we began to fear that all the bridges would be swept away; and still the train never came. We were tolerably patient until the hour had passed: then we became restless. Children cried for something to eat; and, indeed, a good warm supper would have been very acceptable to all.

Another hour passed; no train, no supper, and seemingly not much hope of either. And still another hour, but no train!

This hour seemed very long indeed; longer than all; but the children had cried themselves to sleep—that was some comfort. The women sat patiently on the hard benches, and gave up every superfluous cloak and shawl to make beds for the babies. The men paced the wet floor,

tried to stir up the wet wood, read all the advertisements on the walls, leaned their faces close against the dirty windows, and looked out into the darkness.

If anyone chanced to move suddenly, or seemed to listen, in an instant all were listening intently for the train. The ticket agent nodded on his perch, and no one else belonging to the depôt was visible. The one lamp grew very dim, and finally went out; we waked up the nodding man, and asked for oil to fill it. "There was none," he answered; "expected some by the next train," and he slept again.

The stove-door was opened, and the now blazing wood threw a dim light over the room. The wind howled dismally, and at times came rushing over the open prairie in sudden gusts, threatening to tear the roof from our little depôt, fancy cornice and all. We only shuddered, and drew as close as possible to the stove. Still no signs of the train.

The wood at last burned out, and there was no more to be had; at least, the man said so, and we knew not where to find it. Again we were about to be left in darkness, when one of the ladies opened her carpet-bag and produced a long wax candle. Here was a treasure indeed! You may laugh, but it truly seemed so. We inquired how she chanced to have it. "I never travel without matches, candle, soap, and towels; they are often needed, and not always to be had," was her answer. We blessed her for her thoughtfulness, and resolved to provide ourselves with a supply at the first town we came to, should we ever be so fortunate as to leave our present quarters.

The lady began talking in a low tone to some of those near her, telling how she came to dread being left without a light. As she was the only one speaking at the time, low though her voice was, we began to listen attentively: gradually her words became louder; quite distinct. What she said was very interesting, and for the next half hour we forgot to listen for the train. The story can never interest others as it did us at that time, but I will try to tell it as correctly as I can.

"When I was a very little girl, not eight years old," she said, "my father went to live in Indiana. A sudden loss of fortune overwhelmed him, and he took the wild step of removing to a farm in the backwoods. The farm was in the very midst of those thick, dark woods, about five miles from the town of 'Harrison,' then a small village. There was not a human habitation within a mile of the house, and but very few within three miles. People here on the prairies talk of the 'heavy timber' on the river bottoms; why, it would not be considered anything more than a hazel thicket by the side of the deep, dark, dense forests of Indiana. To live in the country, is to live in 'the woods,' and 'tis wonderful how people ever find their way out when once they get fairly into them.

"How my father came to select this spot for his home we could never tell; he was quite unused to a country life, having always lived in town. Our mother had died six months before. He went, and took his three girls, two of them growing-up, and I a little one, to the then far west, and fixed his abode in that rough, solitary log-house. He wished for solitude, he said to his remonstrating friends; but he forgot that his daughters, accomplished young ladies and delicately nurtured, must be solitary too. They were startled at the change; I, child-like, enjoyed it.

"How happy I was the first day of our arrival at the new home! I could not think why my sisters cried when papa was not present, and why they tried to conceal their red and swollen eyes from him. I was delighted; the wide fire-place was so queer, and the stick chimney charming. I could romp as much as I pleased, and as my best dresses were not put on now, I had no fear of spoiling my clothes. I lived out of doors most of the day, and at night was sound asleep as soon as I had had my supper. What if the house was small and poorly furnished? it seemed all pleasant fun to me.

But my sisters mourned over the great change; not a day passed that they did not shed bitter tears at their sad fate. It was rather hard for young, accomplished girls of eighteen and twenty, to be taken from society, and be buried in the woods. Buried there without companions or interests of any kind, save only their almost worshipped father, for never did children love a parent more than we did this our only one, and he tried to fill the place of both father and mother to his three helpless girls. Yes, helpless enough; for I believe, young as I was, I knew about as much of housekeeping as my sisters did when we went there, and we had no help of any kind. Servants would not follow us to the backwoods.

"Papa went to work on the farm with a will, but he knew as little about it as my sisters did of housekeeping. When at work near the house I was with him; and if he went only one field distant we watched him constantly, distressed if he passed for a moment out of sight. It was so lonely! He would come in at sundown, tired with his new labour; I would climb his knee, kiss his blistered hands, and beg him to let me go with him the next day when he went to put up the fence or to burn brush. He would smooth my tangled and neglected hair, call me his little tomboy, and promised to buy me a pony when his 'store-ship came in from over the sea.'

"There was one family living about two miles distant, their name Ramay. They had called on my sisters, and seemed inclined to be neighbourly. Mr. Ramay had sent his boys over to help my father for one week; and Mrs. Ramay invited my sisters to come and see her daughters: two smart, good-looking girls. The invitation was not accepted: but we had gone over to Ramays' once or twice to hear

the preacher on Sunday. He only came to the neighbourhood once a month, and the service was held at Mr. Ramay's. Their house, rough though it was, was far better than ours. It was what is called a double house, quite spacious.

"I had spent the night there the last time, as it rained so fast, and Mrs. Ramay kept me. I was particularly delighted with the loft where I slept, because I could lie in bed and look at the stars through the open logs. Of course my sisters held their heads at first far above the Ramay girls: but there's nothing like the backwoods for bringing people to a level.

"The paths through the woods were very indistinct, as it was not more than once or twice a week that anyone passed from one house to another. So, lest the way should be lost altogether, chips were cut from the trees on either side at regular distances; these marks are called 'blazes.' My father, being told at first to follow the blazes, and then there could be no danger of losing his way, he, not knowing the meaning of the word, had concluded that it must mean trees that had once blazed. He followed the path as far as he could trace it, and then looked out for trees that were blackened by fire; and as these were far apart, and not by any means in a straight line, he lost his way entirely, and didn't find a cabin, where he could inquire the way, until he had walked full six miles in place of the three he had expected to travel. After that, he never attempted to go a mile without a compass in his pocket.

"We knew the way to the Ramays', however, and my sisters had, one Sunday, walked there alone. They were a little nervous, and expected some wild beast to spring out from every stump, for we had heard wonderful stories of wolves and panthers. We often heard the wolves howling at night, but had never caught sight of one. Bessie and Bella shivered at the howl of a wolf, and would draw close to papa in the room, of an evening, when it was heard. He only laughed at their fears, telling them to throw open the door and let the beasts see the light, and they would not come nearer; as all wild beasts dislike fire. For my part, I rather enjoyed their howling. It gave us something new to talk of, and what could harm me when papa was near?

"You will think I am never coming to my story; but you shall have it yet, if the cars don't come. I love to recall those early days, and linger over the strange scenes. It seems like a dream now; for we remained but a short time there, so that we did not grow accustomed to the strange life. We were but introduced to it and then left it for ever.

"One morning our father told us at breakfast that he would have to go to Harrison that day, to purchase some farming utensils, and that he would be home by three o'clock in the afternoon. It was so seldom he left us that we made as much fuss as if he had been going on a long journey; for how could we pass the long day, and know that papa was not near us? What might not happen to him or to us? I sobbed

violently as he bade me good-bye ; and, to dry my tears, he told me that if I learned a good long lesson to recite to him in the evening, he would bring me a pair of gold earrings. My sisters looked sad as they handed him hat, cane, and *compass*, and we all stood in the doorway watching him, until he entered the thick, dark woods, and we could see him no longer.

"Bessie and Bella busied themselves clearing away the breakfast things, chatting pleasantly together. They seemed to forget me ; and I slipped away, lest they should set me to the lesson—and I wanted to play first. So I and my dog ran off to a favourite stump near the front fence, to finish a playhouse I had been decorating for some days with broken china, moss, acorn cups, and various other ornaments.

"Pingo, my dog, was no beauty, but I loved him dearly, and he was my constant companion—my friend, playmate, and confidant. He was a long, lean, brindle cur, something between a mastiff and hound, faithful, watchful, and thankful for the attention I showed him. He always shared in my playhouse suppers, sitting demurely on one side of the log, our table ; sometimes my pinafore was tied about his neck, and sometimes spread over our rough table. He expected every other mouthful, and always got it, and at the close of our meal he cleared the table by devouring all that remained of the precious scraps I had brought from the house. Strange how much that kind of dog can eat ; nothing comes amiss to them, and they never seem to have enough. Many a long story did Pingo silently listen to of the good times I used to have in the old home ; of the pretty dresses and hats I wore ; of the beautiful carriage I used to ride in with mamma, of the large, fine shops, and of the pretty little white dog I had owned. But I always ended by telling him that I never had such a good, big, nice dog as the one I had now in the woods—my Pingo. Then he would shake his great long head knowingly, and springing up suddenly, perhaps upset my china, and run barking into the bushes after imaginary squirrels, just to show me he could talk as well as I."

Here the lady paused; and, with a smile, asked if we were not weary of this childish story. "No, no ; go on, please ;" "We are thankful to listen ;" "We can almost imagine ourselves in the *woods*, in place of being becalmed on a prairie," was heard from all sides. One man did get up, opened the door, and looked out. Some one asked what he was looking for. "The cars," said he, quite seriously, and all of us laughed. A gentleman politely remarked that he had quite forgotten what we were waiting for, and he only hoped the train would *not* come to interrupt our story.

"I can end it in five minutes," said the lady ; "I had no idea of telling a story when I began, but merely a simple incident. It has spun itself out, and I think I have felt as much interested in it as anyone present." And she resumed her narrative.

"My playhouse was all arranged to my mind, and I had tied my long-sleeved pinafore round Pingo's neck, put his black paws carefully through the sleeves, and told him to make believe he was a lady, and I was another lady coming to call upon him, when he set up a loud bark, upset my shelf of dishes, and, springing to the fence, placed his front feet on the upper rail with his long nose pointed towards the woods. I fairly screamed with laughter at the comical figure he cut, for the pinafore was put on like a coat, the band just fitting round his neck, and the long strings brought round and tied in a knot on his back, his tail lifted the skirt slightly, as you have seen monkeys' coat-skirts looped up, and with those huge paws sticking out of the sleeves — what a picture he made!

"My sisters came out at the unusual noise to enquire the cause; to see what it was. The louder I laughed, the louder Pingo barked, and they laughed too when they caught sight of Pingo in his fancy dressing-gown. Just then there appeared on the path, leading out of the woods, two girls on horseback, coming like the wind, as if riding a race. Before we could speak, they sprang from their horses, and standing on the high fence begged us to call in our dog, if *that was* a dog that stood barking at them so furiously. At the sound of their voices, Pingo, finding he had no enemies to contend with, sneaked off to a corner of the fence, and began gnawing at his dress, feeling quite unfit to receive visitors in that plight.

"It was the two Miss Ramays; they had ridden over in great haste, just as they had been at their work, with homespun cotton frocks, blue sun-bonnets, and rosy cheeks. They came to invite my sisters to a quilting that afternoon; they expected several friends, young men and young women, would gather at it.

"Now, Bessie and Bella had been shut up in the woods for months; they had never met with any of the young people, and never been to any kind of party. Glad enough were they to hear of anything that was likely to have any fun in it; but their father was gone out: what answer could they give? The lively girls would hear of no denial, but insisted on my sisters coming early, and staying all night. 'Better bring Kate with you,' said they, as one of them pulled my curls as she passed me, and the other tried to stroke my face the wrong way; and springing on their long-limbed colts, they started on the full run for home, to resume their preparations for the evening. Such looking 'colts,' as they called them, were seldom seen with ladies on their backs: but many a city lady would give something to sit a horse as those girls did. They offered to send the horses over, if my sisters would like to ride. But the offer was declined. Bessie and Bella had never been on horseback except in a riding-school; and this kind of rough riding was very different from that they had been taught.

"They ran back into the house. I called Pingo, to take off the

pinafore, and found but little of it remaining: he had torn it woefully Expecting to be scolded, I went dejectedly in; but found Bessie and Bella in the best and easiest of humours. That quilting-party was something to look forward to, and they were marvelling what in the world it would be like. I said, when they asked me, that I would not go: I preferred to stay at home for papa, and put in my new earrings. That pleased them: I suppose they did not want the trouble of me: and they began to look over ribbons and laces and party attire. Then all at once thinking how ridiculous such things would appear in a cabin in the backwoods, they laughed, put them away, and said they would go in their plain dresses.

"'I do wonder if there will be anything like dress, though?' cried Bessie. 'Look here, Bella, if ——'

"'But what if papa does not come back in time?' I asked.

"'Oh, you hush,' said they, both at once. 'Sit down, Katy, and eat your pie.'

"We had no regular dinner cooked that day; and, as it was quite warm, the fire got neglected; before three o'clock it was quite out, as one of my sisters found, to her great annoyance, when she wished to heat an iron to smooth out some ribbon that had been long folded. Now matches were not known in the West at that time, and the tinder-box was in common use. But my sisters were careless young housekeepers; no tinder was prepared, and the flint was lost. Papa had promised to bring a new one from Harrison. The fire had never been let go out before. It all came of the expected quilting.

"Three o'clock, and no signs of papa. My sisters were uneasy, ready and waiting to start; and they sent me out to the fence to look for him. I did look, and look, until my eyes ached. Pingo knew something was wrong, and went snuffing about in every bush, and at last caught a poor little rabbit, and laid it half dead at my feet. I had only wanted an excuse to cry, and now I fairly sobbed over the wounded rabbit; its large mournful eyes were wide open, and its poor little quivering mouth was pitiful. Pingo was quite ashamed of his work, and came and licked my hands; but I drove him away, and told him I would never, never like him again, which sent him off sorrowful and repentant. I was sorry enough for every cross word I had said to him before that night was over.

"Getting down from the fence, I was sitting on the ground with my apron over my face, and the little dying rabbit in my lap. My sisters came to the door and called, but I would not answer. Coming out, they took the rabbit softly away—it was dead now—and they led me into the house, and spoke so kindly to me that I cried harder than ever. Then they began to pet and coax me, and, child though I was, I knew they had some object in doing so, for they generally laughed at my childish griefs.

"'Katy,' said Bella, 'do you mind our starting now? Papa will soon be here; we shall be sure to meet him, and we will tell him to hasten.'

"'Of course, Katy won't mind it; she's such a brave little girl,' put in Bessie. 'I am going to give her a lot of pretty things to play with.'

"'You must give them to me to *keep*,' said I, remembering how they had often served me; 'and if you meet papa, you must not look at my new earrings; I want to see them first.' So the bargain was made, and any quantity of old ribbons, pieces of bright silks, some prints, and an old bead bag, were given to me to keep.

"With all my treasures spread out on the bed, they were welcome to go, for me. They kissed me kindly as they said good-bye. Calling in Pingo, they told me to stay in the house till papa came; and, closing the door as they went out, they left me. I listened for a moment, but could not hear their footsteps on the soft grass, so I made Pingo jump on the bed beside me, and was soon interested in looking over my pretty things. Many, many years have passed since that day, and yet I can remember every piece of ribbon, every piece of silk, and the figures of every one of the prints, as they lay, spread out on that bed: which was papa's. The beads delighted me, and I began to rip them from the bag, and wondered how many *strings* of beads I could make from it. Pingo was pleased with his soft bed, and lay stretched at full length, while I tried the effect of my ribbons and laces by spreading them over him, tying up his ears, and putting bracelets on his paws. He would sometimes open his eyes and peep at me through lace spectacles, looking so funny that I laughed heartily. I did not feel lonely or even think of being afraid; and many odd fancies and pleasant thoughts came into my mind that afternoon.

"At last the sun went down, and the room became rather dark, so I left the bed; and opening the door, sat down with my dog on the door-step. The day had been warm; but the evening was quite chilly, and as I looked at the wide fireplace I wished for the means to kindle a fire. I even stirred up the ashes to see if there was any heat in them; but no, they were quite cold. Then, for the first time since my sisters left me, I began to feel lonely, and to wonder why my father did not come. As I sat cowering over the cold ashes, Pingo came to my side; and, standing on his hind feet, looked up the broad chimney, and set up a loud barking. I stood on the back log and looked up to see what he was barking at; and there, on the sticks of which the chimney was built, sat some little birds, quietly roosting for the night. 'Now,' thought I, 'it must be late, for the birds have gone to bed. Pingo wants his supper. Oh, why does not papa come?' I left the house and went out to the fence; but somehow I did not like to look at that path leading off into the woods, for all my friends had left me by that very

path : so I went back, Pingo close at my heels ; he seemed to know he was my only protection now, poor fellow, and kept close by me. A bright thought entered my head, I would put the table ready for papa's supper, and get him the best supper I could without fire. So I drew out the heavy table from the wall, pulled it about until it would stand steady on that uneven floor, as I had often seen my sisters do ; and I felt as important as any young housekeeper could ; talked to Pingo ; and boxed his ears for pulling the table-cloth half off with his paws in his efforts to assist me, and told him of the nice supper he should have when papa came home. He only answered by barking up the chimney at the winking birds.

"When I had placed the forks and spoons and what eatables I could find on the table, I bethought me all at once of a jar of precious quince preserves. Bessie was very choice with them ; I had never tasted them but once, and that was when a stranger had chanced to stay to supper. They were on the highest shelf of a tall cupboard made of rough boards, and not fastened in any way to the wall. This cupboard had no doors, only sides and back and shelves; and to reach the top shelf I began to climb the shelves, silly child that I was ! Down came cupboard and child and all.

"Such screams, I think, never came from one cabin containing only a child and a dog. How I escaped being killed was a miracle ; the cupboard was very rough and heavy, and I was under it, or partly so ; but I managed to crawl out with my face and hands cut and bleeding. Broken glass and china covered the floor, and my hair was well soaked with quince jam. Poor Pingo had his share of bruises too ; his foot was bleeding, and a piece of glass stuck in his side. He yelled, and so did I. A pan of milk was emptied all over me ; and, shaking with cold and fright, I rushed out of the house, Pingo after me, into the dusky twilight, screaming and sobbing. 'Oh papa, papa ! Oh Bessie and Bella !'

"The dark woods gave back no answer ; but the whippoorwill's mourning cry and the hooting of an owl startled me and drove me back again. What a wreck it was ! Broken glass and china and crockery-ware, mingling with smashed pies, preserves, milk, and cake !

What would papa say to it ?—would he be very angry with me ? I did not care if my sisters were angry ; for I was beginning to feel that they had treated me cruelly by leaving me. Then I cried over my cut hands and bleeding face. I washed poor Pingo's foot, and he whined pitifully : but I forgot to wash my own bleeding face. I was wet and cold, and must have been hungry too ; but I did not think of eating.

"Once more I called to my father, and then burst out crying again. Pingo barking louder than ever, and between us we did make 'night hideous.' At least it was so to us, as we sat howling together on the door-step. Owls hooted, whippoorwills joined in the chorus, bats

fanned our faces, and the darkness increased; still we sat on, on the cold stone step. Pingo was the first to move; he would go in as far as the wreck and smash, then limp back, touch my poor bleeding face, and again go in. Soon another howl was heard at a distance, and every hair on the dog's back stood up like bristles. I knew it was the howl of a wolf, and I followed Pingo in, but did not close the door. I was afraid indoors, afraid out of doors. Only once more I went to look out, but the path could not be seen now, not even the fence, for it was quite dark. I thought what if that wolf meets my father in the dark woods and eats him up! 'Oh, he will never, never come,' I moaned, and threw myself down on the stone hearth with my arms round Pingo's neck. But the dog was restless, and kept walking to the door and back again, uttering low growls. He wanted me to shut the door, but I did not understand him. The darkness troubled and frightened me greatly: my father had often said that light would keep off wild beasts. Oh for a light, for just one spark of fire!—and yet I dared not shut the door. I sat down on the back log, and tried to see the little birds on the chimney rafters, but I could only hear their low twittering; that was some company for me. I could no longer see my dog: he must have been guarding the door: but he came to me at last, and curled down in the ashes beside me; and I drew his head in my lap, and my tears bathed his face as well as my own. I cannot tell how long we sat there, but it seemed an age to me. I cried for a light, I begged my father to come and bring a light; and I prayed in my childish way for a light and for a fire. And from that day to this I cannot bear darkness, and always carry matches and candles with me wherever I go."

We could readily believe it.

"Surely," she continued, "no night was ever *so dark* as that one. When the howl of the wolf sounded nearer, I could feel the coarse hair on Pingo's back rise up under my hand; he would stand up close to me and growl savagely, but he never left my side after I slipped from the back log and sat down with him in the ashes. I never thought of going to bed, not even of lying down on the one in the room, papa's; I was too terrified to stir. I was constantly listening for my father, and I heard every sound distinctly, the birds in the chimney, the crickets in the wall, and those dreadful beasts. No prisoner in his dungeon ever longed for light as I did then. I did not reflect that this darkness could not last, that daylight would supersede it; darkness had come *for good*, as children say. Oh, that dismal darkness!—was it dark everywhere? Were all my friends dead, and in the dark? I crouched closer to my dog, and asked him if he could see *me*.

"Once when a sort of crackling sound was heard, as of feet stepping amongst dry brush, I tried to get up, for I thought it was my father; but Pingo was on his feet instantly, and stood directly across me, so that I could not move. He did not bark—only gave a low growl, and

stood thus, holding me down till the sound ceased. I did not fear the wolves now; I did just once think they might hurt Pingo; but I cared for nothing but the darkness: it was that that frightened me. When Pingo lay down again I put my head on his, and lay there sobbing and shivering; and at last I fell asleep. And in this position I was found by my father about seven o'clock the next morning. What was his astonishment, as he entered the open door, to find me, his youngest child, lying in the ashes, with only the dog in the house. He saw the overturned cupboard, the broken glass and dishes, the general disorder of the room, and my blood-stained dress and face. What had happened? were my sisters murdered? These were the questions he asked. But I could only cling to him and say in my bewildering joy at seeing him, 'Oh, papa, you did come and bring a light: I thought you would!' and it seemed that I should never let him go again. He feared I had lost my senses; and I had, in a measure, for every nerve was quivering.

"He made a fire, warmed some water, and washing my much-soiled hands, face, and head, put a clean frock on me, and laid me on his bed. I soon slept soundly, with my hands in his. He had been delayed at Harrison. It was quite late when he started, and his compass being of no use in the dark, he, as usual, lost his way. After walking miles and miles, he at last gave it up and sat down under a tree to wait for daylight. He thought how frightened we should all be, left alone in the night; but he never dreamed of the poor forsaken child cowering in the chimney corner with only the faithful dog for her protector.

"My sisters returned, and sobbed over me for half the day, and papa would not reproach them when he saw how much they reproached themselves. They never thought but that he would have been back home before evening.

"When the story of my lonely night got abroad, I seemed to be quite a curiosity. On Sunday, after the service was over at Mrs. Ramay's, the people gathered round me, asking all kinds of questions, and marvelling that the wolves and panthers had not run away with me. 'Guess they would if they'd not smelt the dog,' said an old farmer."

"And, ma'am, how long did you young ladies have to stay in the backwoods?" asked a listener.

"A very short while after that," she answered. "My father saw the mistake he had made in taking us to them. He was tired also of his experiment; and we all went back to our civilized home."

At this moment, when the words were yet upon her lips, the door of the depôt was flung open; a young man put his head in, all hasty excitement, and we heard simultaneously a sound not to be mistaken.

"The cars!" he cried. "Ladies and gentlemen, here come the cars."

# MADAME LAROCHE.

"THERE he goes again!" thought old Madame Laroche, gazing fretfully after her handsome young nephew as he crossed the porch of the pretty rose-embowered cottage opposite her own imposing residence. "What evil genius brought that Louise Deville to her sister's just at the time that Maurice came here, nobody knows, unless indeed it was Madame Deville herself. I daresay she thought Maurice would be a fine catch for her husband's poor sister.—Ha, not at home, eh! Gone up to the Hill, of course," her thoughts went on, as the young man turned from the door and hastily made his way to the street again. "And there he goes after her! I verily believe the minx steals off to that hill just to entice him. Well, well, Mademoiselle Louise, we'll be even yet! It's a long lane that has no turning."

Madame's eyes dropped abstractedly to the floor as her offending nephew vanished around the corner. Minute after minute she sat there, an expression on her face never found on that of a good woman. At length she arose with a satisfied smile, and, despite her sixty odd years, quickly ascended the stairs to a back chamber whose windows overlooked a fine expanse of country.

"Yes, yes, well enough to see what they are about up there," she muttered, taking a small spy-glass from the closet and adjusting it with a vicious jerk. "Humph, just got there! shaking down the scarlet maple leaves to announce himself. Well, she does look pretty, certainly, under the purple sunset glow and that flame-like shower. But riches should mate with riches, and she's as poor as a church mouse."

Long and patiently madame watched the two, and when they finally left the shadow of the old maple she put away the glass with a few quick nods that betokened no good to Louise Deville.

A little later she was making a careful tour of her beautiful front grounds. In due time her patience was rewarded. The two for whom she watched came slowly down the street. The suave old lady courteously greeting Mademoiselle Deville was quite another woman from the patient spy of the previous hour.

"I pray you to come in, my dear," she cried, throwing open the gate and kissing Louise on both cheeks. "While Maurice goes to the post-office for me I will show you how defiant my summer flowers have been of the great winds."

Maurice looked surprised.

"How is it that Joseph did not go?" he asked. "Is he ill?"

"No; but he seemed so tired that I forbade his stirring, knowing that I could send you."

"My aunt Laroche has suddenly become very considerate," thought Maurice, as he excused himself to Louise, and hurried away. "Joseph was all right two hours ago."

It was but a stone's throw to the post-office, and madame took advantage of Louise's first remark as they turned from the gate.

"Yes, my dear," she answered brightly, "it is a charming place, and I am proud of it. But I assure you I shall be doubly so when Maurice's lovely bride is installed here as mistress. She is a magnificent creature, Louise, and, Maurice says, the loveliest on the face of the earth—or has he made you the confidant of his rapturous admiration of Marie?"

"No, madame," answered Louise, a little faintly, as she bent over the fragrant bloom of a jasmine.

"He has not? Well, I am surprised, I admit. But dear me, how ghastly pale you are!" she abruptly cried as Louise reluctantly turned from the friendly jasmine. "You should not inhale that heavy perfume; it is very injurious to persons of your fine organization. Here, my dear, let me give you a bit of the more delicate mignonette."

And madame stooped and culled with elaborate care a few sprigs, resuming, as she placed them in Louise's hand—

"I was about to say that I often tell Maurice he should, under the circumstances, be more careful in his deportment towards the ladies. But, dear fellow, he whispers soft nothings and looks unutterable things without a thought beyond the delight of the moment. But here he is, and furious he'd be if he knew I'd been telling tales. So you must——"

"Telling tales," laughingly echoed Maurice Arnot as he joined them. "If they are pleasant ones, I'd like to be a listener, too, Aunt Laroche. Did you find them entertaining, Mademoiselle Deville?" he asked, his love-soft eyes trying to scan her face in the deepening twilight.

"Undoubtedly," she answered, lightly and pleasantly, "since Madame Laroche was the narrator."

"Thank you, my dear," bowed madame, sweetly, and then, more to change the subject than anything else, she said, turning to Maurice, "I see you have letters. Are there any for me?"

"Three for you, as many for me, and one for Mademoiselle Deville."

"We will go into the house, then," returned madame. "I shall not depend upon your eyesight in this failing light."

Once in the house, Louise gracefully yielded to Madame's pressing invitation and remained. And so finely did she deport herself, that before the evening was half over, madame was querying within her own bosom whether, after all, the lips and cheeks had not whitened under the jasmine's perfume.

"But it doesn't matter," she thought, as at a later hour Louise bade her a gay good-night, "Maurice is safe. She's sure to give him the cold shoulder, let him make love ever so finely. I must, however, send her a little note to-morrow when he is out of the way, and enjoin the strictest

secrecy. It is barely possible she did not understand I was about to do so when he interrupted me."

But the current of madame's thought was speedily changed. On returning to the drawing-room and opening the letters, she found that business of vital importance to her monied interests would necessitate her leaving home for a distant town in the course of the next forty-eight hours.

"I can't possibly get off to-morrow," she decided, after a minute's anxious reflection. "So it must be left till the day after."

Meantime, Maurice Arnot stood on the cottage porch wishing a good-night to Louise Deville, who still made a show of sparkling spirits.

"You are perfectly brilliant to-night," he murmured, gazing half-tenderly, half-reverently at the face which was, indeed, exquisitely beautiful under the soft moonlight. Then, with a sudden, passionate impulse, he caught her hand, exclaiming, "Love me, Louise! love me! and so tranform this hard world into a paradise! I have sometimes dared to hope you could and would. Will you, Louise?—My beautiful Louise!"

With a proud gesture, Louise withdrew her hand and stepped back, replying in haughtily emphatic tones to his concluding words.

"You have! Then learn that you are vastly mistaken! I never will! We must be friends though, Monsieur Arnot. A flirtation so pleasant should not end in open rupture. Shall we be friends, M. Arnot?"

She extended a little, ice-cold hand. He barely touched it, replying frigidly, as he lifted his hat, "Just as you please, Mademoiselle. Good night."

The next minute he was striding across madame's grand hall. At the foot of the stairs madame's voice arrested him.

"Maurice, come here. I wish to see you before you retire," she quavered from the drawing-room door.

He turned quickly, anxiously enquiring as he hastened towards her, "Are you ill, ma tante?"

"No, no," she returned, more naturally, "not ill, but troubled." And too much absorbed in her own cares to observe his pale face, she continued, "I have bad news here from Mr. Martin, very bad."

And as they seated themselves, she gave him the letter, still open in her hand.

"It is bad enough, indeed," he presently remarked, as he thoughtfully re-folded the sheet. "You will go to-morrow, of course?"

"It is impossible. Jules comes to-morrow about that——"

"Pardon me, Aunt Laroche. Never mind Jules. I will attend to your interests here. It is true Mr. Martin says the day after to-morrow will do; but it is quite evident that he is anxious for your immediate presence. Go then, without delay."

So madame started on her journey, utterly forgetful, in her overwhelming anxiety for the thousands at stake, that the intended note to Louise Deville remained unpenned.

Nor did her mind revert to it till the weight of anxiety oppressing her had been relieved by an interview with Martin. Under the rebound lesser cares presented themselves.

"It is really quite unnecessary to write," she thought; "but I will nevertheless do so to-day, and thus make all safe beyond the shadow of doubt. I can't possibly leave here in less than a week, and it would beawkward for me if she should happen to tax Maurice with this engagement of my fanciful creation."

Accordingly the note was written; and also a lengthy epistle to her nephew, detailing minutely the important points of the business claiming her attention. They were sealed and posted in time for the night mail, and duly received the following morning.

Maurice, seated before the library table, opened his with eager interest. But he was soon intensely mystified.

"I know, my dear," commenced madame, "that you are to be trusted, else I would not have committed what I did to your keeping. So you must not construe this into an expression of doubt on my part. The truth is, I have been a little fearful that you failed to gather from my last hasty words, that I was about to place a seal upon your lips in regard to the subject which had just engaged us. I therefore concluded to write and impress it upon you, that the conversation was strictly confidential, and on no account to be repeated till the matter becomes public."

"The deuce!" muttered Maurice Arnot, "does my good aunt Laroche think I have taken leave of my senses? The idea that I would bruit her business abroad! Trouble must have turned her brain," he thought again, as he went on reading.

"And now let me assure you, my dear," continued madame, "that I consider you the very soul of honour, and know that I have only to express my wish to have it most carefully observed. The secret which I confided to you about my nephew is known only to a few inti——"

"Her nephew! The secret!" exclaimed Maurice, in angry surprise. "To whom can she be writing?" And he hastily turned to another page. "Mademoiselle Louise Deville! By all——"

The sentence remained unfinished. Starting from his chair with a force that sent it whirling to the floor, he dashed out of the house and across the street to the cottage.

"Mademoiselle Louise is down in the summer-house, sir," replied the servant to his impetuous inquiry, and Maurice strode through the hall to the indicated spot.

"I have a letter here, Mademoiselle Deville, which needs some explanation," he exclaimed, throwing himself into a seat opposite the one from which Louise had nervously started. "It is from my aunt, and though directed to me, was meant for you, I found, after possessing myself of a portion of its mystifying contents. Will you be good enough to enlighten me as to its meaning?"

"Perhaps," smiled Louise from the seat she had resumed, "this may prove a key," handing him a letter addressed to her. "I am quite unacquainted with its contents, for on reading 'My dear nephew,' I turned at once to the signature, which proved to be Madame Laroche's."

Maurice took the letter; and continued sternly,

"What secret has my Aunt Laroche confided to you? It is my right to ask, and my right to be answered, since it appears from this precious epistle that it concerns me above all others."

A crimson flush dyed Louise's pale face as she said gravely, "You should certainly be able to conjecture, Mr. Arnot, what madame would be likely to confide as a secret."

"I certainly am not," he returned, controlling his angry excitement with an effort. "But you will do me the greatest kindness if you will explain at once. Again I ask, what is the secret?"

Louise, paling and flushing alternately, at last answered somewhat falteringly, "I have only heard the story of your engagement, Mr. Arnot."

"What?" he asked, in amazement. "I don't understand."

"Marie—the lady to whom you are engaged," she replied, still more falteringly.

"Marie! when did you hear all this?" he asked, calmly and gravely.

"The evening that I spent with madame," answered Louise again, looking much like a prisoner at the bar.

He gazed silently at her downcast face a moment, and then wheeled around and stood in the doorway of the summer-house for what seemed an age to Louise. Presently he came back to her.

"And you believed her, Louise?" he said, reproachfully. "You believed her after all my silent worship of yourself? Louise, no one could have made me doubt you!"

"Could I doubt your own aunt?" murmured Louise.

"But you could doubt me! Now listen, Louise. Marie is a creature of my aunt's imagination—all that she has told you is a fiction. I love you, and you only. Will you be my wife, Louise?"

Louise's answer must have been favourable, for madame received by the next post a letter from Maurice which contained the following:

"Your letters were duly received by Louise and me, and the necessary exchange made. Believe me, my dear Aunt, we both thank you warmly for so promptly undoing what was so unwisely done. Louise and I are very happy and ask your blessing upon our engagement."

The sheet dropped from Madame's hands.

"Letters exchanged! what have I done? what have I done?" she exclaimed, in utter astonishment and shame.

But she took good care never to ask either Maurice or Louise, and deciding to make the best of a disagreeable event, she called on Louise the next week with a bland innocence truly edifying to the lovers.

# FIVE THOUSAND A YEAR.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

## I.

ON a comfortable sofa by the side of a large fire in a spacious London drawing-room, lay a lady, young and handsome. Not, however, in the extreme of youth, or in girlhood, for she had been a wife and mother some years, and was getting towards eight or nine and twenty. Her face was deathly to look upon. Not a shade of colouring appeared in its features, even in the lips; and the eyes were not like eyes, but like two lumps of lead set in there. She had recently passed through a perilous illness, and though so far recovered as to be in the drawing-room, it could not be said she was out of danger. Excessive debility, continued inward fever, and a cough that could not be got rid of, struggled with each other now, and kept her down. She was lying with her eyes closed, awake, but in a sort of unresisted stupor: she mostly lay so all day long, and had done so for the last ten weeks. One, drawing near, could have heard her laboured breathing, rendering her sentences, when she did speak, abrupt and broken. It was Margaret, the wife of Adam Grainger.

The room door opened, and a lad of six came in; too boisterously—but how impart thoughtfulness to young children? He had his mother's handsome features, her expressive dark eyes, and her naturally fine colour. She slowly opened her eyes.

"I want to say good-bye to you, mamma. Sophy was going to take me without, but I ran away from her."

"And have woke up your ma, like an obstinate boy as you are!" broke in Sophy, "I wonder, ma'am, you don't forbid his coming in, unless you please to ring for him."

"I thought you were already at school, Algernon," she panted. "Is it not late?"

"Half-past two," said Sophy.

It was on the stroke of three, but the servants had sat gossiping over their dinner, and Sophy did not hurry herself to move. She thought her mistress, lying there, would not know whether it was late or early. The child drew near to kiss her.

"Algernon, darling, be a good boy. Sophy, did you ask Mrs. Smith this morning how she was?"

"No, ma'am, I didn't think of it. She looked as usual." Mrs. Smith was Algernon's governess. She kept a day school hard by. She was not strong, often complained of feeling ill, and Mrs. Grainger had got into the habit of asking Sophy how she was.

They left the room, and Mrs. Grainger relapsed into stillness. But

thought came across her, troubling her mind, as it often did; though it made no outward sign.

Should she live? Or would this illness be her consignment to the grave? She could not bear to think of it: though her great weakness caused her to feel all anxiety, even this, less poignantly than would one in health. She could not bear to think of leaving her children; she could not bear to think that another might ever usurp her place with her husband; be *his* wife, and their second mother. And yet—unless she speedily got better ——

The room door opened again, and the same child entered. Sophy also.

"Mrs. Smith's very poorly, ma'am. Her head is that bad she feels it impossible to keep school this afternoon, so she has sent them all back again."

"How tiresome!" feebly uttered Mrs. Grainger.

"She desired her respects to you, ma'am, and she hoped you would excuse it for once, but that indeed she was too ill to bear their noise."

"Well, well; children *are* troublesome when one is ill. Take him into the nursery, Sophy, and help nurse to amuse them. Algie, dear child, I am not well enough to have you here."

The boy bounded off, full of life and spirits, intending to play with, or tease, his sister Isabel: and what with thinking, dozing, and restlessly turning, the invalid got through another hour or two. The servants came in now and then, to see to the fire, or to urge refreshment on their mistress, and the next interruption was from Mr. Grainger.

He was as remarkably good-looking as of yore, full of spirits as his little son, and he came in with a merry smile on his face, and a cheering word. No words but cheering ones were ever heard from him. He edged himself on to the sofa, and leaning over his wife, kissed her repeatedly.

"Adam," she sighed, "I feel so low this afternoon! I know I shall never get better."

"You foolish girl! You are a mile and a half better than you were a week ago. And I have brought some news for you."

"Yes?" she languidly answered.

"It's this. I called on Dr. Rice as I came home, and he assured me you were progressing towards recovery as fast as one, so ill as you have been, can progress. And he has engaged us to go there to dinner this day month, for he knows you will be ready for it."

"How stupid he is!"

"You will not say so when you find him right. You have not had the baby in worrying you?—or Algernon?"

"No; not any of them."

"That's right! Did cook get you the oysters and do them nicely?"

"She got them, but it was of no use. I cannot eat."

"But you must eat, Margaret," he answered, in a more serious tone. "It is no good going on, day after day, saying you cannot eat; you must eat."

She made no reply. Only sighed and took possession of his hand, lying with it pressed close to her, her eyes closed. He gazed at her in silence; and, now that she was not looking, the hopeful expression faded from his own face. He *knew* she was in a precarious state.

"Little has got into a splendid thing," he said, presently.

"Has he?"

"Some mines in Cornwall. He and some more fellows are going to work them. I expect, when the thing's regularly afoot, Little will be netting his thousands a year. It is astonishing to hear his account of the wealth opening to them. I have half a mind to drop my spare cash into it."

"Nonsense, Adam!"

"Of course I must hear more about it first, and be all sure. I am going out after dinner to meet Little, and look at his plans and papers. But I shall be back by eight o'clock, Margaret."

Mr. Grainger's getting back at eight, proved to be ten. His head was in a whirl with the grand projects for making wealth, just unfolded to him. They went out of it, however, when he found his wife still in the drawing-room; and he inquired, almost in anger, how she could be so imprudent.

"I waited for you," she said, scarcely able, now, to speak from exhaustion. "And I have too much bed. Up from it late, and going to it early! It makes me weaker. I know it does. To-morrow I shall get up to breakfast."

"Margaret! how can you speak so foolishly?"

"I shall. I shall get up and try it."

"Very well," he cheerfully said. He would not contest the point then, for she was in no state for it.

And the following morning she did get up. Not to breakfast, but directly after it. By ten o'clock she was in the drawing-room. Standing for a moment at the window, and looking out on the gay London street, she saw Sophy cross the road with Algernon in her hand, towards the house of the schoolmistress. It was partly within view, down a side street, at right angles with their own.

"Sad management!" she exclaimed, turning to her sofa. "Ten o'clock, and the child not taken! It is a sign I am away from everything."

She lay down: and presently, to her surprise, she heard the voice of Algernon on the stairs, talking to one of the servants. Sophy came in alone. "What have you brought him back for?" her mistress said, almost sharply.

"If you please, ma'am, Mrs. Smith is dead."

Mrs. Grainger rose up and looked at her, really doubting her ears. "What do you say, Sophy?"

"Mrs. Smith is dead."

"Dead!"

"Dead, ma'am. She died in the night. Her husband says it was decline, and she knew she should not get well, but she bore up to the last to keep the scholars together. I expect they had nothing else to live upon, for he gets no teaching at his foreign languages. He is cut up above a bit, poor man, and says he did not know it was so very near. She was only thirty-one: and he don't look so old."

Mrs. Grainger motioned the gossiping servant to leave the room, and lay back on her sofa. Sharp thought came over her with its adder stings. Dead! And she had murmured in her heart at the child's being returned on their hands for *one* afternoon, fearful of his noise disturbing her, when this poor lady had struggled out her life in its midst!

## II.

THE weeks rolled by, and Mrs. Grainger was recovering. Not quite so speedily as her physician had hopefully prophesied, but on the whole very well. A shade of pink was returning to her cheeks; she only lay down now and then; and, the greatest sign of all, her naturally vigorous mind was resuming its tone. As to her husband, his whole thoughts and heart were concentred upon one point—the Great Trebeddon Mines.

One day, a little later than his usual hour for returning, he came bustling in, tearing up the stairs four at a time. His wife was in the drawing-room, one of her little children on her knee.

"How are you, Margaret? All right, I see. What have you got for dinner?"

"For dinner!"

"Because I have asked Little. He'll be here in a minute or two."

"To-day! I wish I had known. There's no time now to make any addition."

"Oh, Little's not particular. He will take pot-luck. I told him so. Really, Margaret, the vista opening to that man is truly astonishing."

"He is lucky."

"I am so glad you are well enough to be down with us in the dining-room; you will be so interested in what he says. Everybody must be. I declare I would rather have that man's prospects than be heir to the first dukedom in the three kingdoms."

Mrs. Grainger laughed.

"Indeed—there's his knock! Pack off that child, Margaret. Stay! I'll ring the nursery bell."

George Little was a man of forty; but in spite of his having attained

to that sober age, he was in no settled condition of life. The fact was, Mr. Little's was a nature too enthusiastic for common business. He had tried his hand at many things; schemes chiefly; and could not be said to have succeeded in any. Either he had grown tired of them, or they of him. A fine fortune of his own had long been dissipated, and he had always some new project on hand, by which it was going to be redeemed. He was good-hearted, good-natured, and good-tempered; a little, quick man of rapid, eager speech, with a keen dark eye set deep in his head, and plenty of intellect above it. Just now he was wild—*wild*—about these mining schemes he had entered on.

"Such a thing, ma'am!" he protested to Mrs. Grainger, when he was fairly launched on his subject after dinner, and his earnest look and tone proved *his* perfect faith in what he asserted, "such a piece of luck that is not met with once in a century! You have heard of Trebeddon?"

Mrs. Grainger had heard the place mentioned by her husband. She believed it was somewhere in Cornwall.

"In Cornwall it is, ma'am. Colonel Hartlebury bought it three years ago for an old song, neither buyer nor seller suspecting the mines of wealth hidden underneath. It is only recently the discovery has been made. There's a princely fortune, ma'am, for a dozen people and for their families after them, down to, I don't know how many generations, for one cannot calculate it."

"The mines are copper, I believe?"

"Copper and tin, Margaret," broke in Mr. Grainger, in an equally eager tone with his guest. "On the neighbouring estate of Trewater there has been—how much realised to the shareholders since it has been worked, Little?"

"The last year they netted about four thousand apiece. Something out of that was kept back for expenses, I forget what. You see, about a dozen only have got it in their own hands."

"But is there no risk?" inquired Mrs. Grainger.

"Not the slightest, if the thing is worked properly," answered Mr. Little. "It is as safe as the bank. In the last number of the *Mining Journal* there's an account of certain mines which have already yielded a profit of £2,000,000 sterling to the company working them."

"Two million pounds sterling!" repeated Mr. Grainger, in admiration. "In Cornwall?"

"In Cornwall," assented Mr. Little. "And these very identical mines had been abandoned by the first workers of them! They went at it the wrong way, you perceive, ma'am; reaped only disappointment; lost their money, grew tired, and forsook them. Another body of men, cautious, wealthy, and experienced, stepped in, and have found their reward. Two millions sterling have that lucky company already netted from what were looked upon as ruined mines."

"They must be a profitable source of wealth when they are judiciously managed," remarked Mrs. Grainger.

"Ma'am! the profits are too vast to be estimated. One's mind gets lost in the contemplation. My embarkation in these mines I look upon as the one fortunate step in my life."

Mr. Grainger was beginning to think it might be the one fortunate step of his. He had been bitten with the mania of speculation, and the disorder was taking rapid hold of him. He had said to his wife that he felt induced to embark his spare cash in the Great Trebeddon scheme, and he forthwith hastened to do so. It was not much: and well had it been for Mr. Grainger had he embarked nothing more. But he lent his name, he lent his energies, and he lent his mind.

He held his lucrative appointment in one of our first-class insurance offices, which his father had held before him. His salary was already £1,000 per annum, and it was a progressing one. Surely enough to satisfy the moderate wishes of a reasonable man!

Still, a few more weeks went by. One evening, upon coming in, Mr. Grainger found his wife had only then entered, for he met the carriage driving from the door. He began to scold.

"Margaret, this is too late for you to be out. Recollect you are not strong yet."

"It is late for me, Adam, I know, but I was well wrapped up, and the carriage was closed. The truth is, I have been shopping. I wanted a dress for the christening."

"What christening!"

"Baby's. He is five months old: quite time he was christened."

"Isn't it done?"

"Done! Why, Adam, I think Mr. Little and his mines have put other things out of your head! He was only baptised."

"I knew it was something of the sort. But—about your going shopping. It was very imprudent, Margaret. I would have chosen your dress."

"You!" laughed Mrs. Grainger. "You don't know silk from woollen; stripes from checks."

"Don't I! Only try me."

"I will. I will try you now. I could not decide in the shop, so they put two or three in the carriage for me to choose from here. There are the parcels, if you will open them."

He did so. And displayed three silk dresses.

"What is that?—a fourth!" exclaimed Mrs. Grainger, detecting another parcel. "Oh, it is that handsome one. I told them not to send that. Sly traders! they thought to tempt me, did they! Is it not beautiful, Adam?"

"Very. Much better than the others. Why don't you fix upon it?"

"Because it is too dear. I am not justified in giving so much. The fact is, Adam, I do not much want a new dress, for I have plenty of good ones, only I thought I should like to wear something new at little Walter's christening."

"You would like this dress, I see, Margaret. I will give it you."

Margaret laughed. "That will be something like robbing Peter to pay Paul. Whether it comes out of your pocket or mine, Adam, I suspect it is much the same. It is too costly."

"My dear, you need not hesitate at the cost of a gown. It is an insignificant item, taken in connection with the income that will soon be ours. In a little while if you choose to spend ten times as much in dress, you may do so."

"Dear me! It seems as if one could not realise it. Yet we have been quite happy: we seem to have had all our wants fully supplied."

"Here—who's that?" he suddenly called out, hearing some one pass the door—"Sophy? Oh, it's you, Jemima," he added, as the nurse appeared. "Take that into your mistress's room." And he proceeded to put up the rejected silks.

"They will be sent for presently," said Mrs. Grainger. "Adam, is it really true that so great a fortune is opening to us?"

"My dear, my share will not be a farthing less than five thousand a year. I wish I was not hampered with that confounded office, I should be down in Cornwall on the spot, hastening the works on. However, it will not be long before I emancipate myself from it. Would you like a trip into Cornwall, Margaret?"

"When I am stronger."

"It would be the very thing for you, I know, and do the children good. Suppose we go down for three or four months when the weather gets warm! We could get a furnished house, I dare say, in the neighbourhood of Trebeddon."

"And let this for the time?"

"Let this! No; give it up. I don't mind sacrificing some rent. When we return, we shall require a residence of far superior style to this. I saw Little to-day, Margaret, and he says they have begun to sink the whim-shaft."

"Whim-shaft?" she echoed.

"You don't understand, I see. Were you ever down in a mine, Margaret?"

"No," she answered with an amused look.

"You shall go down one, and see its wonders."

"But do ladies venture down such places?"

"Oh, it's nothing, if they have plenty of pluck. How delighted Algie will be to explore it! I shall take him down. The miners, round about, think these works of ours will yield a larger return than any in the

district," added Mr. Grainger, returning to his hobby. "They are putting up smiths' shops, powder and material houses, and I don't know what all."

"It must be running away with a deal of money, Adam!"

"Of course. But only think of the returns!"

The following morning, upon Mr. Grainger's entering the offices of the insurance company, at his customary hour, he was requested to walk into the directors' private room. Two of them were there, the chairman, and Mr. Phelps. They were growing in years now, and had been directors in his father's lifetime.

"Mr. Grainger—take a seat—we have requested you to step in here for the purpose of answering a question or two that we wish to put to you. Do you know anything of this?"

The chairman, as he spoke, opened a printed sheet of paper, and set it before him. Not a second glance at it needed Mr. Grainger. It was the flaming prospectus of the Great Trebeddon Mining Company, which had been issued forth to the public: his own name appearing in it as large as life.

The chairman laid his finger upon the spot. "'Adam Grainger, Esquire:' that must be you."

"It is, sir."

"Did you not know that it is a rule of this office that none of its clerks, superior or inferior, may connect themselves, in any way whatever, with any private or public company?"

"No, I did not," said Mr. Grainger, the colour flashing into his face at being, as he looked upon it, dictated to; he, a man of five thousand a year in prospective!

"That is strange. Your father knew it well. I think it must have escaped your memory."

A dim recollection began to dawn on Adam Grainger that there was some such rule in existence. He had completely forgotten it.

"My being connected with the Trebeddon mines cannot render my services here less efficient," he said.

"That is not the question," interposed Mr. Phelps. "The rule is the rule, and all must abide by it. If you are suffered to transgress it, why may not every one else in our employ do the same?"

Mr. Grainger bit his lip.

"Besides, your being connected with an excitable scheme like this does make your services here less efficient," observed the chairman. "Your thoughts are naturally given to this new business; they are taken from your legitimate duties."

"It is not a *scheme*," fired Mr. Grainger, "it is a tangible, bonâ fide undertaking. The mines are second to none in England for richness of ore: they will yield immense returns."

"They don't yield them yet," curtly remarked the speaker, looking at

Adam through his spectacles. "I suspect they are absorbing funds, instead of yielding them."

"Of course they are, sir, at present. Nothing can be done in any business, without an outlay at the first onset."

"May I ask how much of it you have contributed as your share?"

"All I had," was the answer. "About three thousand pounds."

"Ah. Take my advice, Mr. Grainger, let your three thousand pounds go, and say nothing about the loss," said the chairman emphatically. "In after years you may count the loss a gain, if it shall have taught you prudence."

"Ay, ay," nodded Mr. Phelps. "Let it go; let it go."

"Let my three thousand pounds *go!*" ejaculated Adam Grainger, believing the two grey-haired gentlemen before him must be candidates for Bedlam. "What for?"

"You will never get a shilling returned upon them, and you'll only plunge deeper into the mire."

"Have you heard any ill of the Trebeddon mines?" he scarcely dared to inquire.

"Nothing at all: but we know the nature of these things. We are unacquainted with the 'Great Trebeddon' except from this prospectus, and from the advertisements."

"I thought it could not be," he said, in a relieved tone. "It is the finest prospect, sir, that has appeared for years."

"If it is like other mining prospects, it will be 'fine,'" observed the chairman. "They generally end in the ruin of all connected with them."

"Two ignorant old savages!" was the mental compliment of the listener.

"However—to bring the matter in question to an issue, Mr. Grainger. It resolves itself into this: either you must give up the Great Trebeddon, or you must give up your post with us."

"I have been contemplating the probability of giving up my post here later," he replied.

"It must be one or the other *now*," cried the chairman.

Mr. Phelps rose and laid his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "I regarded your father with no common esteem," he said, "and for his sake—and, it may be, a little for your own—I take an interest in you. *Be persuaded.* Look upon this new scheme with our eyes of experience, and remain with us. You will do so if you know when you are well off."

"I expect in a short time to be clearing my five thousand a year from these mines," said the younger man, in a low tone. "There are not many of us in it, and the returns to be divided will be enormous."

The chairman coughed, not a pleasant cough to Adam, for it sounded full of mocking unbelief. "We shall be sorry to lose your services, Mr. Grainger," he said, suppressing its sound. "Rather than do so, we will

make it better worth your while to stay with us: your salary shall be raised at once to twelve hundred a year. Reflect well before you reject it: a bird in the hand is worth half a dozen in the bush, remember."

"I thank you greatly, gentlemen. But I would not give up the prospects opening to me for twice twelve hundred."

"Take until next Monday to consider," interposed Mr. Phelps. "We do not insist upon your answer to-day."

"If you prefer to receive it then," was the somewhat ungracious reply. "But it will be the same."

"Understand one thing, Mr. Grainger," said the chairman, in a sharp, decisive tone, for nothing vexed him like obstinacy: "we have gone from our usual course to give you this warning, out of regard to your late father; any other than you would have received summary dismissal. If, after this, you do give up your situation in this house, you give it up for ever. Under no circumstances will you be permitted to enter it again. I pass you my word of that, as chairman of the board of directors."

"Sir," returned Adam Grainger, "what could induce me to wish to re-enter it? My fortune will be made."

"Very well, sir. Our interview for to-day is over."

"Until Monday next," added Mr. Phelps.

"Margaret!" cried Mr. Grainger, bounding into his wife's presence when he reached home, "it's all done."

He spoke in an unusually joyous tone, and she looked brightly up, expecting, probably, that the first year's five thousand pounds had arrived in a parcel.

"Yes! What is it?"

"Those old governors at the office have saved me the trouble of resigning. They called me in this morning, Gatherby and Phelps, to tell me they were ready to discharge me."

"Is that all?" said Margaret. "I suppose they knew you were getting above the situation—in fortune, I mean—and graciously released you."

"Oh did they, though! They are a couple of slow old tubs, who can't get beyond the jog-trot way of their forefathers. The sort of people you know, Margaret, who would rather jolt from here to York in the waggon than risk the railway. They gave me a lecture upon prudence,—as keen a one as ever I had from my father,—urged me to send the mines to the right-about, and remain with them."

"Indeed!"

"They would raise me to twelve hundred a year, they said, if I would have done with the Trebeddon. And if not ——"

"What?" asked Mrs. Grainger.

"There was the alternative of leaving them at once. By Monday next I must do one or the other. They need not ransack their brains as to which it will be."

"So soon!"

"Some old rule they recalled to my recollection, which I declare I had forgotten, that no one employed in the company must put a finger into any other pie. I would not have minded staying on a quarter of a year longer, till the warm weather has come in and the thing is more afloat. But I don't care about it. It is as well as it is. So, in a few days, Margaret, I shall be my own master: a gentleman at large."

"Adam," said Mrs. Grainger, thoughtfully, "do you consider it will be prudent to throw up your situation before you receive returns from the other thing?"

"I cannot retain it, as I have connected myself with the mines. Did you not understand me?"

"You are *sure* of these returns from the mines?"

"The returns are as sure as if I had them at this moment in my hand. They will be speedy, too, Margaret."

Still Mrs. Grainger looked thoughtful. "A thousand a year—twelve hundred you say now, I am sure they are very liberal—is a serious sum to give up without equivalent. Remember, we have four children."

"Without equivalent!" repeated Mr. Grainger, opening his eyes in wonder. "Why, Margaret, you are borrowing ideas from Gatherby and Phelps. The equivalent will come in the shape of four or five times as much."

"Well, you understand business matters better than I do. But I wish you could retain your post until the other returns were assured."

"Don't look so gloomy, Margaret."

"Did I look gloomy? I did not know it. I was only thinking."

"What were you thinking?"

"Adam, let me speak out. I know your nature is so very sanguine that I believe you see things with a brighter hue than most men. I was thinking, if the Trebeddon mines should not turn out as you expect—they *should* fail—where shall we be?"

"Upon my word and honour, Margaret, you pay me a very high compliment! How long have you thought me a simpleton? Do you suppose I cannot see the way before me clearer than that? It is not a bit of use talking to women about business," he continued, chafing considerably. "They can't understand it."

"My dear husband, your interests and mine are the same," she gently said. "If I beg you to be cautious and prudent, it is for your sake as much as mine. Think of the children."

"I do think of them: and of you, too. It is for their future that I am anxious to amass wealth. Were I a single man, with only myself to look to, I might go on in the old humdrum way. Twelve hundred a year would suffice me well."

Adam Grainger no doubt spoke as he thought: that if he had nobody but himself, he would be content with his salary. He was unconscious how thoroughly he was mistaken; he was unconscious that the speculating mania had fastened upon him, and that the power urging him on was *not* the future interest of his family, but the fever of the disorder. There is no cure for it, none, until it has had its course. A pretty sharp cure generally comes then.

## III.

THE time went on to autumn; say, rather, to the beginning of winter. No particular change had yet taken place, save perhaps in the manner of Mr. Grainger: anxiety, disappointment, and hope deferred, were rendering his naturally sweet temper an irritable one. The Great Trebeddon Mines could not be said to have failed, and they could not be said to have prospered; they were hovering between the two. One of the unhappy speculators who had purchased a right in them was in the habit of likening them to the horse-leech; since they sucked in all the money that could be raised, and were continually asking for more. Give, give! give, give! it was their incessant cry: but they seemed determined to render nothing in return. Adam had been down to the mines. The first time he remained a fortnight, and had come up enraptured: the second time he remained three weeks, and had come up more enraptured still; the third and last time, he had returned not quite so much so. Mr. and Mrs. Grainger were still in their house: not having yet removed to a superior one.

"Adam," his wife said to him about this time, her face wearing a look of anxious uneasiness, "I really must have some money to go on with. Do you know that the tradespeople are beginning to refuse further trust?"

"Which of the tradespeople?"

"None of them are so attentive as they formerly were; so anxious to send for orders. But the butcher is growing troublesome."

"An ungrateful dog!" exclaimed Mr. Grainger. "Seven years, and more, have we been good customers to him, and paid him weekly. What does the man mean?"

"Adam, don't be cross; that will not mend matters: we must put ourselves in their places before we blame them. It is more than six months—eight nearly—since they have received any money, and they know you are no longer in the insurance-office. I wonder they have given us credit so long as this. I have been wishing—if you have no objection—to discharge two of the servants. We can do very well with the others."

"Margaret, you will drive me wild! What in the world is the good of taking a gloomy view of things? To talk in this way, is to dispirit one for everything. It cannot be long, now, before we have returns:

the ore is in the mines, and must be made to realise. We shall soon have money."

"So we have thought for the past six months," she ventured to say, "and it does not come. By discharging two of the servants, we should lessen expenses so far. It will be better to do it."

"Yes! and to stop our credit at once by letting it be known in the neighbourhood that we are compelled to curtail our establishment! You cannot see an inch beyond your nose, Margaret!"

Mrs. Grainger thought she could see much farther, but did not contest the point. "They are asking for their wages," she said.

"They must wait," was his authoritative answer.

"And there is something else being asked for. Though really, Adam, I cannot bear to speak of these things, you take me up so sharply."

"Not you, Margaret," he said, in a softer tone; "but these stupid people vex me with their folly. What is it that is being asked for?"

"The rent," she said, in a low tone.

"The rent! What, old Barker?"

"He called when you were gone to the City yesterday. He said he was sorry to be pressing, but he feared you had got into a mess that you would not readily get out of, and of course he must look to his own interest. He spoke civilly."

"Civilly you call it?" foamed Mr. Grainger. "*What* did he say—that I had got into a mess?"

"Mess or mesh; I did not rightly hear, and did not ask him. I don't think he will wait much longer, Adam. Three quarters are owing now."

"The insolent old miser! Afraid of three quarters' of a year's rent! —from *me!* He must have taken leave of his senses."

"Adam, I do not think you see things quite in their right light. If we were as we used to be, people would not mind waiting years for their money: wait, and never ask for it. But it is the fact of your not doing anything just now, of your not being in a way of making money, that alarms them. If ——"

"I won't talk with you any longer, Margaret," impatiently interrupted Mr. Grainger; "you are as senseless as they are. Not in any way of making money, when you know that the mining operations are going on, and that thousands must be on their road to us! I am astonished at your want of foresight, Margaret."

He went out of the room as he spoke, encountering one of the servants outside. "Mr. Little has called, sir," she said. "He is in the dining-room."

"Little! Oh, that's right: the very man I should like to see. So you have returned?" he exclaimed, shaking hands with his guest.

"Came up last night."

"And how go on things in Cornwall?"

"Well—slower than we should like to see them," hesitated Mr. Little. "The fact is, there has been more trouble getting these mines in working order than any of us anticipated. Things looked so promising at first."

"Do you mean to say they don't look promising now?" wrathfully demanded Mr. Grainger. He had been the sweetest-tempered man in the world, but these disappointments fretted him.

"They are as promising as ever," replied Little. "But the difficulty is to realize the promises. We are at a standstill for want of money."

"Not a complete standstill?"

"I am sorry to say we are."

"Child must advance it."

"Child won't. I have just been to him, and he flew in a regular passion. Says he washes his hands of the lot, and wished the mines had been in a certain hot place before he had ever heard of them. But I caught a whisper, down at Trebeddon, that Child had been burning his fingers with some other speculation, and had not the money to advance. I firmly believe it is so."

"Colonel Hartlebury?"

"He is cleaned out. Down to his half-pay."

Adam sat and drummed on the table. "How much is wanted now?" he asked.

"About two thousand pounds, we compute ——"

"Why it was two thousand pounds three months ago, and you have had double that since!" came the interruption.

"It was that influx of water that played the deuce with us. But we now believe, and with reason, that two thousand would bring the ore into the market. Of course, every step has advanced us nearer to it."

"What is to be done?"

"Can you give us a little more help, Grainger?"

"You may as well ask this table for help as me. Those bills you got me to sign and raise money upon, will soon be due, and I don't possess a brass farthing towards meeting them. It is a good thing Mrs Grainger knows nothing about the bills: they would worry her mind night and day."

"We are all in the same predicament," cried Little.

"No you are not," was the quick response of Mr. Grainger. "You have none of you put bills out."

"If we don't get the ore into the market speedily, it will play Old Gooseberry with us all."

"We *must* get it in, Little."

"I know we must. But I don't see how it's to be done, unless money can be found. There's not five hundred pounds among us, that's available."

"Have you seen Green?"

"No. I am going to call upon him when I go back to the City. He can do nothing."

"I'll go with you," said Mr. Grainger. "We must stir heaven and earth about this. It would be desperation for it to fail now."

"And a debtor's gaol and the Bankruptcy Court, after it," spluttered Little.

Adam Grainger's face flushed hot, and he passed his handkerchief over it. The face grew hotter and hotter.

"Better set on and hang ourselves than stand that," added Little, as they went out.

## IV.

You remember those two remarkable plates in the book of "Martin Chuzzlewit?" The wondrous city of Eden as it appeared in print, and the wondrous city of Eden as it proved in reality. You remember Martin's rapture, his uplifted hands and eyes when reverently contemplating the public buildings in the picture; his indignation at Mark Tapley's somewhat suspicious remark, "Perhaps they growed spontanous?" Just what that flourishing city of Eden, in print, was to the enraptured mind of Martin Chuzzlewit, had the great Trebeddon mining scheme been to Adam Grainger; and just what the city proved to be when the two expectant travellers reached it—a feverish swamp, a wild ruin—had the Great Trebeddon Mines faded to now.

But did even this effect the cure, and serve to open the eyes of Mr. Grainger? Not it. Not yet. If he had had ten thousand pounds at his command, he would still have thrown it into the yawning gulf. But he had not the ten thousand No, nor ten pounds.

Need you be told the sequel? The Great Trebeddon Mines proved a failure. Whether from want of copper and tin, or from want of capital to disembowel them, is of no consequence here; they failed, and ruin overtook many who had connected themselves with them. The most perfect ruin fell upon Adam Grainger. Christmas passed quietly, and then all the ill came rushing on at once. The bills he had accepted became due, and he was sued upon them; the report of the failure of the mines flew about far and wide; the landlord paid him a visit in the peculiar fashion loved by landlords, and all the tradespeople came down upon him together. And soon, worse than all, Mrs. Grainger had to battle out her trials alone, as she best could, for her husband was taken to cool his ardour within the walls of the Queen's Bench prison. He had better have kept to his twelve hundred a year!

But we have not done with him yet.

# THE ARGOSY.

*APRIL* 1, 1874.

## IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

### CHAPTER XII.

#### TOM BRISTOW'S RETURN.

"WHAT can be sweeter or more charming than an English May-day? I declare I've seen nothing in the East at all comparable to it."

The speaker was Tom Bristow; the person addressed was a casual compagnon de voyage, whose acquaintance he had made during the Channel passage; and the scene was a first-class compartment in the mail train from Dover to London.

"You wouldn't be so ready to praise an English May-day if you had been here last week, as I was," was the reply. "No sunshine—not a gleam; but, in place of it, a confounded east wind that was almost keen enough to shave you. Every second fellow you met spoke to you through his nose; and when you did happen to get near a fire, you were frozen through on one side before you were half warmed through on the other."

"Well, it's pleasant enough now, in all conscience," said Tom, with a smile of easy content.

Tom Bristow, who was very thorough in most of his undertakings, had remained abroad—extending his travels into Palestine and Egypt—till his health was completely re-established. But, as he said to himself, he had now had enough of sands and sunsets; of dirty Algerines and still dirtier Arabs; of camel-riding and mule-riding; of beggars and bucksheesh; and he was now coming back, with renewed zest, to the prosaic duties of everyday existence, as exemplified, in his case, in the rise and fall of public securities and the refined gambling of the London Stock Exchange.

By the time he had been a week in London he had made himself thoroughly master of the situation again, and almost felt as if he had never been away. "I have been so long used to an idle life," he said to himself, about a week after his return, "that very little work seems to knock me up. Why not take the five o'clock train this afternoon, and run down as far as Gatehouse Farm, and spend a couple of days with old Li Dering? Where in the wide world is there any air equal to that which blows across the sandhills of the old farm?"

Between nine and ten o'clock on Sunday morning Tom Bristow knocked at the well-remembered door. After sleeping at the Station Hotel, he had walked leisurely across the fields, his heart beating high with the expectation of shortly being able to grasp his friend by the hand. Everything seemed as if he had left the farm but yesterday, except that then it was autumn and now it was spring. Mrs. Bevis answered his knock. She started at the sight of him, and could not repress an exclamation of surprise. "Yes, here I am once more," said Tom, with his pleasant smile. "Don't tell me that Mr. Dering is not at home."

Mrs. Bevis's answer was a sudden burst of tears.

"What has happened, Mrs. Bevis?" cried Tom, in alarm. "Not—not—?" His looks finished the question.

"Oh, Mr. Bristow, haven't you heard, sir?" cried Mrs. Bevis through her sobs.

"I've heard nothing—not a word. I have only just returned from abroad."

"Mr. Dering, sir, is lying in Duxley goal, waiting to take his trial at the next assizes."

"His trial!" echoed Tom in amazed perplexity. "Trial for what?"

"For wilful murder, sir!"

"Can this be true?" cried Tom, as he sank back, with blanched face and staring eyes, on the old oaken seat in the porch.

"Only too true, sir—only too true!" moaned Mrs. Bevis. "But I'll never believe that he did it—never!" she added emphatically. "A kinder heart, a truer gentleman, never drew breath."

"I'll say amen to that," replied Tom, earnestly. "But Lionel Dering committed for wilful murder! It seems an utter impossibility."

"Why, all England's been ringing with the story," added Mrs. Bevis.

"And yet I've never heard of it. But, as I said before, I've only just got back from the East, where I was two months without seeing a newspaper."

"I couldn't bear to tell you about it, sir. My heart seems almost broken as it is. But I've got the newspapers here with all the account in. Perhaps you would like to read them for yourself, sir."

"I should indeed, Mrs. Bevis. But did I understand you aright when you said that Mr. Dering was in Duxley goal?"

"That's the place, sir."

"Duxley in Midlandshire?"

"The very same, sir."

"But what was Mr. Dering doing so far away from home?"

"Law, sir! I'd forgotten that you were a stranger to the news. Master's a rich man now, sir. His uncle died last autumn, and left him a great estate close by Duxley. He's been living there ever since."

"You astonish me, Mrs. Bevis. But what is the name of the estate?"

"Park Newton. But may I ask whether you know Duxley, sir?"

"I know Duxley very well indeed. I was born and brought up there."

"To think of that, now!"

"Then the name of Mr. Dering's uncle must have been Mr. Arthur St. George?"

"That's the name, sir. I recollect it quite well, because it put me in mind of St. George and the Dragon. But I'll fetch you the newspapers."

She brought the papers presently, and left Tom to himself while he read them. The case was as Mrs. Bevis had stated it. Lionel Dering stood committed to take his trial at the next assizes for the wilful murder of Percy Osmond.

Mrs. Bevis, coming back after a quarter of an hour, found Mr. Bristow buried deep in thought, with the newspapers lying unheeded by his side.

"You don't believe that he did it, do you, sir?" she asked with tearful earnestness.

"I would stake my existence on Mr. Dering's innocence!" said Tom emphatically.

"God bless you, sir, for those words!" cried Mrs. Bevis. "There must surely be some way to help him—some way of proving that he did not do this dreadful thing?"

"Whatever friendship or money can do shall be done for him. That you may rely upon."

"Mr. Dering saved your life, sir. You will try and save his, won't you?"

"I will—so help me heaven!" answered Tom, fervently.

"It is strange," mused Tom, as he walked sadly back to the station, "that, in all our long conversations together Dering should never have mentioned that he had an uncle living within three miles of Duxley, and I should never have spoken of the town by name as the place where I was born and reared. And then to think that Tobias Hoskyns, my old governor, should be the man of all men into whose hands Dering has entrusted his case! But the whole affair is a tissue of surprises from beginning to end."

Next morning, at nine o'clock, Mr. Tom Bristow, after a preliminary knock, walked into the private office of Mr. Tobias Hoskyns, of Duxley, attorney-at-law.

Mr. Hoskyns was a frail-looking, spare-built man of some fifty-five or sixty years. He was rather short-sighted, and wore gold-rimmed spectacles. He had grey hair, and grey whiskers that ended abruptly half way down his cheeks, as though too timid to venture farther. He was dressed with a certain old-fashioned precision, that took little or no heed of the variations of fashion, but went on quietly repeating itself from one year's end to another. He was very fond of snuff, which he imbibed, not after the reckless and defiant manner affected by some lovers of the powdered weed, but in a deferential, half-apologetic kind of way, as though he were ashamed of the practice, and begged you would make a point of forgetting his weakness as speedily as possible. He carried an old-fashioned silver snuff-box in his waistcoat pocket, and in another pocket a yellow silk handkerchief of immense size, bordered with black. In short, Mr. Hoskyns was a clearly individualized figure, and one might safely say that, by sight, at least, he was known to every man, woman, and child in Duxley.

He was very pleased indeed to see his quondam clerk. "Then you do still manage to keep your head above water, eh?" he said, as he shook Tom warmly by the hand.

"Yes. The waters of speculation have not quite swallowed me up," said Tom, demurely.

"Ah, you know the old proverb, "a rolling stone," etcetera. You should have stuck to your stool in the outer office, as I advised you to do. You might, perhaps, have been junior partner by this time, and —this in your ear—the business gets more lucrative every year; it does, really. Ah Tom, Tom, you made a great mistake when you left Duxley! Thought you were going to set the Thames on fire, I know you did."

"Experience, sir, is said to make fools wise. Let us hope that I shall have gathered a little of the commodity by-and-by."

"Well, you must come and dine with me this evening. Can't stay now. I'm due at the gaol in fifteen minutes."

"That's the very place to which I want to go with you."

"Eh? Bless my heart, what do you want to go there for?"

"To see the same man that you are going to visit—to see my dear friend, Lionel Dering."

"Why, good gracious, you don't mean to say——" and Mr. Hoskyns took off his spectacles, and stared at Tom in blank amazement.

Then Tom had to explain, in the fewest possible words, how it happened that he and Lionel Dering were such excellent friends. Five minutes later they were on their way to the gaol.

As they passed through the lawyer's outer office, Tom glanced round. With one exception, the faces of all there were strangers to him. The exception was not a very inviting person to look at, but Tom went up and shook hands with him. He was a tall, big-boned, loosely-built man of five and forty, dressed in very rusty black—an awkward, shambling sort of fellow, unshaven and uncombed, with grubby hands and bleared eyes, and with a wild shaggy mop of hair which had once been jet black, but was now thickly sprinkled with grey. The man's features were wanting neither in power nor intellect, but they were marred by an air of habitual dissipation—of sottishness, even—which he made no effort to conceal.

"Jabez Creede is still with you, I see," said Tom, as he and the lawyer walked down the street.

"Yes, I still keep him on," answered Hoskyns, "though if I have threatened once to turn him away, I have a hundred times. With his dirty, drunken ways, the man, as a man, is unbearable to me; but, as a clerk, I don't know what I should do without him. For engrossing or copying, he is useless, his hand is far too shaky. But in one other respect he is invaluable to me: his memory is like a prodigious store-house, in which he can lay his hand on any particular article at a moment's notice. He knows how useful he is to me, and he presumes on that knowledge to do things that I would submit to from no other clerk in my employ."

There was no difficulty in passing Tom into the gaol. In the case of a prisoner of such distinction as Mr. Dering, some of the more stringent of the prison regulations were to a certain extent relaxed. Besides which, Mr. Hoskyns and the governor were bosom friends, playing whist together two or three evenings a week the winter through, and wrangling over the odd trick, as only old companions can wrangle; so that the lawyer's word soon placed Tom inside the magic gates, and after he had been introduced to Mr. Dux, the aforesaid governor, he might be said to be duly possessed of the Open Sesame of the grim old building.

"This is kind of you, Bristow, very kind!" exclaimed Lionel, as he strode forward to greet his friend. "When we parted last we little thought that our next meeting would be in these halls of dazzling light." He laughed a dismal laugh, and pressed Tom down into his own chair.

For a moment or two Tom would not trust himself to speak. "There's a silver lining to every cloud, you know, old boy," he stammered out at last. "You must bear up like a brick. Please heaven, we'll soon have you out of this hole, and everything will come right in the long run, never fear." He felt that it was not at all what he had intended to say, but, somehow, his usual ready flow of words seemed dried up for a little while.

Lionel Dering had been nearly a month in prison. Confinement to a man of his active, out-door life was especially irksome, and Tom was not surprised to find him looking pale and more careworn than he had ever seen him look before. He was extraordinarily cheerful, however, and when Tom told him that it was his intention to stay at Duxley till the trial was over, he brightened up still more, and at once proposed that they two should have a game at chess, there and then, as in the old pleasant days at Gatehouse Farm.

"Dux is very good to me," he explained. "He comes to see me for an hour most evenings. He and I have had several games together. The turnkey will fetch his board and men in five minutes."

Mr. Hoskyns was somewhat scandalized. "I cannot get my client," he explained to Tom, "to evince that interest in his trial, and the arrangements for his defence, that the importance of the occasion demands. It really almost seems as if Mr. Dering looked upon the whole business as referring, not to himself, but to some stranger in whose affairs he took only the faintest possible interest."

"My dear Hoskyns," said Lionel, "you pumped me dry long ago of every morsel of information that I could give you respecting this wretched business. You can get nothing more out of me, and may as well leave me in peace. Employ whom you will to defend me—if defence I need. That is your business, not mine."

So Tom and Lionel had their game of chess, and a long talk together afterwards, and when Tom at last left the prison, it was with a promise to be there again at an early hour next morning.

Lionel Dering's first care after his arrest was to write to Edith West, in order that she might learn the news direct from himself, and not through a newspaper or any other source.

"My darling Edith," he wrote, "a terrible misfortune has befallen me. A gentleman, Mr. Percy Osmond by name, one of my guests at Park Newton, has been foully murdered, and I am accused of the crime. That my innocence will be made clear to the world at my trial, I do not doubt. Till that day comes I must submit, with what patience I may, to be kept closely under lock and key in this grim building from which I write. You see that I write quite calmly, and without any fear whatever as to the result. My greatest trouble in the matter is my enforced deprivation of your dear society for a little while. I will write you fuller particulars to-morrow. I am afraid that it will be necessary to fix the date of our marriage a month later than the time agreed upon, but certainly not more than a month. That of itself is very annoying. I beg that you will not fret or worry yourself on my account. This is but a little trial which will soon be over, and years hence it will shape itself into a seasonable story to be told round the Christmas fire.

Lionel saw from the moment of his arrest that the evidence against him was far too strong to allow him to hope for any other issue than a commitment for trial at the assizes. And he was right. The magistrates before whom he was taken could not do otherwise than commit him for wilful murder. The jet stud found in the dead man's hand, the saturated handkerchief, the streaks of blood on his shirt—damning proofs all, which Lionel Dering could neither explain nor extenuate —left them no other alternative.

And that, to the public at large, seemed the strangest feature of the case: Mr. Dering either could not or would not offer any explanation. If it seemed strange to the outside world that no explanation was forthcoming, how much stranger did it seem to Lionel himself, that he was utterly unable to offer any! How and by what means had those terrible evidences of guilt come there? Day and night, night and day, during his first week in prison, he kept on asking himself the same question, only to acknowledge himself utterly baffled, and as far from any satisfactory answer the last time he asked it as he was the first. All that he could say was, that he knew absolutely nothing; that his mind was an utter blank from the moment he flung himself, half stupified, on his dressing-room sofa till the moment he woke next morning and found his handkerchief saturated with blood. Heartsick and brainweary, he at length gave up all effort to solve a problem which, as far as he was concerned, seemed incapable of any solution; and set himself to face the inevitable with what patience and resignation he could summon to his aid. He could only trust and hope that on the day of the trial, something would turn up, some proof be forthcoming, which would exculpate him utterly and prove once more the fallibility of even the strongest chain of circumstantial evidence. If not—but the alternative was not a pleasant one to contemplate.

As already stated, Lionel's first act after his arrest was to write a note to Edith West. Twelve hours later, Mrs. Garside and Miss West stepped out of the train at Duxley station. The newspapers had told them that Mr. Dering's case was in the hands of a certain Mr. Hoskyns, and the first person they accosted after leaving the station directed them to that gentleman's office. Fortunately, Mr. Hoskyns was at home. They told him who they were, and that their object in coming to Duxley was to see and be near Mr. Dering.

"I shall see Mr. Dering this evening," said the lawyer. "I will tell him that you are in Duxley, and should he prove willing to see you—as I do not doubt that he will—you can accompany me to the prison at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

Lionel was overjoyed to learn that Edith was so near him, and could not find in his heart to blame her for coming, however injudicious such a step might have seemed to many people. But even he,

as yet, had conceived but a very vague idea of the infinite capabilities of a character such as hers.

On the morrow they met, and it was a meeting that made even Hoskyns, case-hardened though he was, remember for a moment that, many, many years ago, he himself had been young.

The moment the door was opened Edith sprang to Lionel's arms, utterly indifferent to the fact that Mrs. Garside and the lawyer were looking on from the background. "My life! my love! my husband!" she murmured, between her tears. "At last, at last!—my own, never to be lost to me again. And this is your home—this miserable cell! It shall be my home too. If they will not let me stay with you, my heart, at least, will be with you day and night—always."

"Now I feel that you love me," was all that Lionel could say for the moment.

"I cling to you because you are in trouble," said Edith. "My place is by your side. I have a right to be here, and nothing shall keep me away. To-morrow, or next day at the latest, Lionel, you must make me your wife."

"What, marry you here, Edith! In this place, and while I am a prisoner charged with wilful murder!"

"Yes; in this place, and while you are a prisoner charged with wilful murder."

"My darling child, what are you thinking of?" in mild protest from Mrs. Garside.

"Aunt, I know perfectly well what I am thinking of. I have been Lionel's promised wife for some time. I am now going to be his wife in reality. I am only a weak woman, I know; I cannot really help him; I can only love him, and watch over him, and do my best to lighten the dark hours of his life in prison."

"But suppose the worst comes to the worst," said Lionel, very gravely, "and such a result is by no means improbable."

Edith shuddered. "You only supply me with one argument the more," she answered. "The deeper your trouble—the greater your peril—the closer must I cling to you. It is hard to see you here—hard to know of what you are accused—but you will break my heart altogether, Lionel, if you drive me from your side."

Gently and gravely Lionel argued with her, but to no purpose. It is possible that his arguments were not very powerful ones; that they were not very logically enforced. Who could have resisted her loving, passionate plea? Not Lionel, whose heart, despite his outward show of resistance, went out half-way to meet hers, as Edith's own instinct too surely told her.

Three days later they were married in the prison chapel. Mr. Hoskyns made a special journey to London and brought back the licence. One stipulation was made by Lionel—that the marriage should be

kept a profound secret, and a profound secret it was kept. The witnesses were Mrs. Garside, Hoskyns, Mr. Dux, the governor, and the chief warder. Beyond these four, and the chaplain, the knowledge did not extend. Even the turnkeys whose duty is was to attend to Lionel had no suspicion of what had taken place.

Three weeks had come and gone since the marriage of Lionel and Edith when Tom Bristow first set foot inside the gaol.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A DINNER AT PINCOTE.

Lionel Dering was blessed with one of those equable dispositions which predispose their owner to look always at the sunny side of everything; and even now, in prison, and with such a terrible accusation hanging over him, no one ever saw him downhearted or in any way distressed. There was about him a serenity, a quiet cheerfulness, which nothing seemed able to disturb; and when in the company of others he was usually as gay and animated as if the four walls of his cell had been those of his own study at Park Newton. The ordeal was, in any case, a very trying one; but it would have been infinitely more so but for the sweet offices of love and friendship which he owed, in one case to his wife, and in the other to his friend. Either Edith or Tom saw him every day. But when all his visitors had gone, and night and silence had settled down on the grim old prison—silence so profound that but for the recurring voice of a distant clock, as it counted the hours slowly and solemnly, he could have fancied himself the last man left alive in the world—then it was that he felt his situation the most. He had been so used to an active, outdoor life that he could not now tire himself sufficiently to sleep well.

It was these hours of darkness, when the rest of the world was abed, and the long, long hours of daylight in the early summer mornings before it was yet awake, which tried him more than anything else. At such times, when he was tired of reading—and he had never before read so much in so short a space of time—he could do nothing but lie back on his pallet, with his arms curled under his head, and think. The mornings were balmy, soft, and bright. Through the cell-casement, which he could open at will, he could hear the merry twittering of innumerable sparrows. He could see the slow shadows sliding, inch by inch, down the grey stone walls of the prison yard, as the sun rose higher in the sky. Now and then the sweet west wind brought him faint wafts of fragrance from the hay-slopes just outside the prison gates. Sometimes he could hear the barking of a dog on some far-off farm, or the dull lowing of cattle: sounds which reminded him that the great world, with its life, and hopes, and fears, lay close

around him, though he himself might have no part therein. At such moments he often felt that he would give half of all he was possessed of for an hour's freedom outside these tomb-like walls—for one hour's blessed freedom, with Edith by his side, to wander at their own sweet will through lane and coppice and by river's brim, with the free air of heaven blowing around them, and nothing to bound their eyes but the dim horizon, lying like a purple ring on woods and meadows far away.

Little wonder that during these long, solitary hours a sense of depression, of melancholy even, would now and then take possession of him for a little while: that his mind was oppressed with vague forebodings of what that future, which was now drawing near with sure but unhasting footsteps, might possibly have in store for him. He had just won for himself the sweetest prize which this world had in its power to offer him, and his very soul shrank within him when he thought he had won it only, perhaps, to lose it for ever in a few short weeks. Bitter, very bitter—despairing almost—grew his thoughts at such times; but he struggled bravely against them, and never let them master him for long. When the clock struck six, and the tramp of heavy feet was heard along the corridors, and the jingling of huge keys—when the warders were changed, and the little wicket in his cell door was opened and a cheerful voice said, "Good morning, sir. Hope you have slept well," Lionel's cheery response would ring out, clear and full, "Good morning, Jeavons. I've had an excellent night, thank you." And Jeavons would go back to his mates and say, "Mr. Dering's just wonderful. Always the same. Never out o' sorts."

Later on would come Hoskyns, and Edith, and Tom. It was impossible for Edith to visit the prison alone, and the lawyer would often make a pretence of having business with his client when he had none in reality, rather than withstand the piteous, pleading look which would spring to Edith's eyes the moment he told her that there would be no occasion for him to visit the gaol that day. While he lives Hoskyns will never forget those pretty pictures of the lover-husband and his bride, as they sat together, hand in hand, in the grim old cell, comforting each other, strengthening each other, and drawing pictures of the happy future in store for them; deceiving each other with a make believe gaiety; and hiding, with desperate earnestness, the terrible dread which lay lurking, like a foul witch in a cavern, low down in the heart of each—that, for them, the coming months might bring, not sunshine, flowers, and the joys of mutual love, but life-long separation and the unspeakable darkness that broods beneath the awful wings of Death.

On these occasions, Hoskyns never neglected to provide himself with a newspaper, and, buried behind the huge broadsheet of *The Times*, with spectacles poised on nose, he went calmly on with his reading, leaving Lionel and Edith almost as much to themselves as

though he had not been there. The sterling qualities of the old lawyer, and the thorough sincerity of his character, gradually forced themselves on the notice of Lionel and his wife, both of whom came, after a time, to regard him almost in the light of a second father, and to treat him with an affectionate familiarity which he was not slow to appreciate.

As Tom Bristow was turning the corner of Duxley High Street, one afternoon about three days after his arrival from London, he was met, face to face, by Squire Culpepper. The squire stopped and stared at Tom, but failed for the moment to recognize him.

"Good morning, sir," said Tom, heartily. "Glad to see you looking so well."

"Why—eh—surely I must know that face," said the squire. "It's young Tom Bristow, if I'm not mistaken."

"You are not mistaken, sir," answered Tom.

"Then I'm very glad to see you, Tom—very," said the squire, as he shook Tom warmly by the hand. "Your father was a man whom I liked and respected immensely. I can never forget his kindness and attention to my poor dear wife during her last illness—never. He did all that man could do to preserve her to me—but it was not to be. For your father's sake, Tom, you will always find Titus Culpepper stand your friend."

"It is very kind of you to say so, sir."

"Not at all—not at all. So you're back again at the old place, eh? Going to stop with us this time, I hope. You ought never to have left us, young sir, but have settled down quietly in your father's shoes. Vagabondising's a bad thing for any young man."

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Tom, in a tone of assumed simplicity.

"Glad you've come round to my way of thinking at last. Knew you would. Well, if I can do anything for you in the way of helping you to get a decent living, you may command me fully. Think over what I've said, and come and dine with me at Pincote to-morrow at seven sharp."

"It would be worth something," said Tom to himself as he went on his way, "to know what my old friend the squire's opinion about me really is; to have a glimpse at the portrait of me in all its details which he has evolved from his own inner consciousness. Strange that in a little town like this, where everybody knows everybody else's business better than he knows his own, if a man venture to step out of the beaten track prescribed for him by custom and tradition, and is bold enough to strike out a path for himself, he is at once set down as being, of necessity, either a lunatic or a scapegrace—unless, indeed, his lunacy chance to win for him either a fortune or a name. And then how changed the tone!"

Next evening Tom found himself at Pincote. The squire introduced him in brief terms to his daughter, and then left the room for a few minutes, for which Tom did not thank him. "What can I say to Miss Culpepper that will be likely to interest her?" he asked himself. "Does she go in for private theatricals, or for ritualism and pet parsons? Does she believe in soup kitchens and visiting the poor, or would she rather talk about the new prima donna, or the last new poem?"

Miss Culpepper had sat down again at the piano, and was striking a few chords now and then, in an absent-minded way. She was by no means a pretty girl in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Her face was a good one, without being strikingly handsome. She had something of her father's shrewd, keen look, but with an underlying expression of goodness and kindliness, difficult to define, but unmistakably there. She had large blue-grey eyes and magnificent teeth. Her complexion, lily-clear during the winter months, was already freckled by the warm May sunshine, and would be more so before the summer was over. Finally, her hair was red—not auburn, but an unmistakable red.

But Tom Bristow had rather a weakness for red hair—not perhaps for the deep, dull fiery red which we sometimes see. He accepted it, as the old Venetians accepted it, as one of the rarest types of beauty, as something far superior to your common-place browns and blacks. And then he did not object to freckles—in moderation. He looked upon them as one of the signs of a sound country-bred constitution. As Jane Culpepper sat there by the piano, in the sunny May eventide, in her white dress, trimmed with pale green velvet, with her red hair coiled in great bands round her little head—with her frank smile, and her clear honest-looking eyes, she filled up in Tom's mind his ideal picture of a healthy, pure-minded English country girl, and it struck him that he could have made a very pleasant water-colour sketch of herself and her surroundings.

Jane spared him the trouble of finding a topic that would be likely to interest her by being the first to speak. "Do you find Duxley much changed since you were here last?" she asked.

"Very little changed indeed. These small country towns never do change, or only by such imperceptible degrees that one never notices the difference. But may I ask, Miss Culpepper, how you know that I am not a stranger to Duxley?"

"Oh, I have often heard papa speak of you, and wonder what had become of you."

"And heard him blame me, I doubt not, for running away from the friends of my youth, and the town of my birth."

"I cannot say that you are altogether wrong," answered Jane with a smile. "Papa is a little impulsive at times, as I daresay you know, and judges everyone from his own peculiar standpoint."

"Which means, in my case, I suppose, that because I was born in Duxley, I ought to have earned my bread there, died there, and been buried there."

"Something of the kind, doubtless. Old-fashioned prejudices, you would call them, Mr. Bristow."

"I daresay I should. But they are worthy of respect for all that."

"Is not that somewhat of a paradox?"

"Hardly so, I think. Men like Mr. Culpepper, with their conservativism, and their traditions of a past—which, it should not be forgotten, was not a past, but a present, when they were young people, and is, consequently, not so very antiquated—with their faith in old institutions, old modes of thought, old friendships, and—and old wine, are simply invaluable in this shifty, restless, out-of-breath era in which we live. They are like the roots of grass and tangle which bind together the sandhills on a windy shore. They conserve for us the essence of an experience which dates from years before we were born; which will sweeten our lives, if we know how to use it: as yonder pot-pourri of faded rose-leaves sweetens this room, and whispers to us that, in summers long ago, flowers as sweet bloomed and faded, as those which blossom for us to-day and will fade and leave us to-morrow."

"When you are as old as papa, Mr. Bristow," said Jane, with a laugh, "I believe you will be just as conservative and full of prejudices as he is."

"I hope so, I'm sure," said Tom, earnestly. "Only, my prejudices will differ in some degree from his—as his would doubtless differ in degree from those of his father—because I happen to have been born some thirty years later in the world's history."

At this moment the servant ushered in Mr. Cope the banker, and Mr. Edward Cope the banker's son. Jane rose, and introduced Tom to them as "Mr. Bristow, a friend of papa's." The banker's son stared at Tom for a moment, nodded his bull head, and then drawing a chair up to the piano, proceeded to take possession of Jane with an air of proprietorship which brought the colour for a moment into that young lady's face.

The banker himself was more affable, in the pompous way that was habitual with him. He never remembered to have heard the name of Bristow before, but being a friend of the squire, the young man was probably worth cultivating, and, in any case, there was nothing lost by a little politeness. So Mr. Cope cleared his throat, and planting himself like a colossus before the vacant grate, entered with becoming seriousness upon the state of the weather and the prospects of the crops. When the squire came in, five minutes later, Tom and the banker were chatting together as if they had known each other for years.

They all went in to dinner. Over the soup, said the Squire to Mr.

Cope: "You were telling me, the other day, that one of your fellows at the bank died a week or two ago?"

"Yes: young Musgrave. Clever young man. Great loss to the firm."

"Well, if you have not filled up the place, it might, perhaps, suit our young friend here," indicating Tom, "if you like to take him on my recommendation. I don't know whether Jenny introduced him properly, but he's the son of Dr. Bristow, who attended my wife in her last illness. I respected his father and I like the lad, and would gladly do something for him."

The banker was scandalized. It might almost be said that he was horrified. To think that he had been invited to meet, and, worse than that, had talked on terms of perfect equality with a young man who was in want of an ordinary clerkship—who would, doubtless be glad of a stool in the back office of his bank! It was monstrous—it was disgusting! But it was just the sort of inconsiderate conduct that might be expected from a man like Culpepper. His manner towards Tom froze in a moment.

"What say you? Can you do anything for him?" urged the squire.

"Why—ah—really, you know—should be most happy to oblige you, or to serve Mr.—, Mr.——"

"Bristow," said the squire.

"Bristow—thank you—but you see—ah—young Musgrave's berth was filled up a week ago, and I'm sorry that I've nothing else just now at all likely to suit the requirements of your—ah—protégé.—I'll take another spoonful of clear soup, if you please."

Tom's face was a study all this time. "I'm in for it now," he said to himself. "The banker will never speak to me again."

"Ah, well," said the squire, "I'll see McKenna, the electioneering agent, to-morrow. I daresay he'll know of something that will suit our young friend."

"Pardon me, Mr. Culpepper," said Tom quietly, "but I'm afraid there's a slight mistake somewhere. I am not aware that I ever expressed myself as being in want of a situation, either in Mr. Cope's bank, or elsewhere. My business, such as it is, lies in London. I have only come down to Duxley to see a few old friends."

"Why, bless my heart," said the squire, "I thought you told me yesterday that you were in want of something to do!"

"A misunderstanding, I assure you, sir. Many thanks to you all the same."

"And what the deuce *is* your business, if I may make bold to ask?" said the squire, testily.

Tom hesitated for a moment. "I believe, sir, I might describe myself as an individual who lives by his wits—such as they are," he said at last.

"And can you manage to make money by your wits?" asked the squire, with ill-concealed contempt.

"A little, sir," answered Tom. "Enough to find me in food and clothes. Enough to satisfy my few and simple needs."

The squire gave a grunt of discontent, and turned towards the banker, who, ignoring any further notice of Tom, at once broached the interminable subject of local politics—a subject that had a fascination for the squire which he was never able to resist. Tom revenged himself by turning his attention to the opposite end of the table, where sat Miss Culpepper, with her faithful squire, Mr. Edward Cope, in close proximity to her. "They are engaged, I suppose," said Tom to himself, "or else she wouldn't let him sit so near her, and glare at her so with those pig's eyes of his. But I'll never believe that she can care for a fellow like that. She's just the kind of girl," he went on mentally, "that, if I were a marrying man, I should like to win for myself—and, by Jove, he's just the sort of fellow that I should glory in cutting out. Has he a word of any kind to say for himself, I wonder? At present his whole soul seems given up to the pleasures of the table."

Certainly, Mr. Edward Cope was no Adonis; but he might have been accepted as a very tolerable representation of a youthful Bacchus clothed in modern evening dress. For a young man, he was abnormally stout. Already, at three-and-twenty, he had no waist worth speaking of. What he would be ten years hence was a mystery. His dress was usually a compromise between that of a horse-trainer and a gentleman. He turned his toes in when he walked, and he had a fat, vacuous face, which, in his case, was a fair index to the vacuous mind within. He was a crack whip, and a tolerable shot—pigeon shooting was his favourite pastime—but much farther than that his intellect did not carry him.

He did venture on a remark at last. "I gave Beauty a new set of shoes this morning," he said. "She didn't at all like having them put on, and kicked out furiously. Ferris did not half like the job, I can tell you; especially after she sent him sprawling into a corner of his own smithy. I never laughed so much in my life before."

"I can't see what there was to laugh at, Edward. I hope the poor man was not much hurt."

"Oh, we got some brandy into him, and he came round all right in about ten minutes. I'm going to try Beauty to-morrow in the new dog-cart. You might let me call for you about eleven."

"You may call for me, if you like, but only on one condition: that you drive me over to see how poor Ferris is getting on."

"All-right. I'll call. But you women do make such a jolly fuss about nothing."

"What a beautiful sunset, is it not, Mr. Bristow?" said Jane turning to Tom.

"Beautiful, indeed—for England; but in no wise comparable, in point of sheer splendour, to the sunsets of the East."

"From which, I presume, we may infer that you are not unacquainted with the East."

"Three months since I was living in the desert as the guest of an Arab scheik."

Jane brightened up in a moment. Here was a chance at last of hearing about something that would interest her. Question and answer followed each other in quick succession, and in less than five minutes the conversation had drifted away into regions far beyond the reach of Edward le Gros, who sat glowering at them in a sulky silence. Which remained unbroken till the cloth was drawn, and Miss Culpepper left the gentlemen to themselves.

"Draw up, boys—draw up closer," said the squire. "Jenkins, bring in two bottles of the blue seal."

Edward drew his chair up closer to the squire, who was totally unaware that everything among his guests was not on the pleasantest possible footing. Both the banker and his son had evidently determined to ignore Tom utterly, but Tom accepted his fate with unbroken serenity.

After a little time, the conversation turned on the probability of a new line of railway being made before long to connect Duxley with a certain manufacturing town about forty miles away. Mr. Culpepper was strongly opposed to the scheme, but Mr. Cope was rather inclined to view it with favour.

"One thing is quite clear," said the banker. "Sir Harry Fulke will do his best to get the bill smuggled through Parliament. The proposed line would just cut through the edge of his estate, and the money he would get for the sale of the land would be very useful to him just now—as I happen to know."

"Pardon me," interrupted Tom, "but if Sir Harry Fulke's word is worth anything at all, he is as strongly opposed as Mr. Culpepper himself to the line in question."

"And pray, sir," asked the banker, with considerable hauteur, "may I be allowed to ask how you happen to know Sir Harry's opinion on this important point?"

"Because I had it from Sir Harry's own lips," answered Tom simply. "We were talking together on this very subject, only a few evenings ago, at Lord Tynedale's."

Mr. Cope stared at Tom as though he could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses.

"Ah, well," said the Squire with a chuckle, "if Sir Harry's opposed to the line, we may make our minds easy that we shall hear very little more about it."

"I'm not so sure on that point," answered Tom. "I know for a

fact that Bloggs and Hayling, the great engineers, are very much interested in getting the scheme pushed forward, and they are generally credited with knowing pretty well what they are about."

"As you seem, sir, to be on such intimate terms with Lord Tynedale," said the banker, with a sneer, "you can, perhaps, tell us the real ins and outs of that strange gambling transaction with which his lordship's youngest son was so recently mixed up."

"I cannot tell you the real facts of the case," answered Tom. "I presume that they are known only to the parties most concerned. But this I can tell you, that I and Mr. Cecil Drake, the young gentleman in question, lived together for three months in Algeria on the most intimate terms; and, from my knowledge of him, I feel perfectly sure that his share of the transaction you allude to was that of a strictly honourable man."

The banker blew his nose violently. This Mr. Bristow was a very strange young man, he said to himself. There was evidently a mistake somewhere. Probably the squire had blundered as usual. In the meantime, it might be just as well to be decently civil to him.

When the evening came to an end, and the banker was putting on his overcoat in the hall, he whispered in the squire's ear: "I suppose you know that your balance is seventy pounds overdrawn?"

The squire's face for a moment turned quite ghastly, and he clutched at a chair for support. He recovered himself with a laugh. "I knew it was very low, but I didn't know it was overdrawn," he whispered back. "But I know what I'm about, never fear. Just mark my words: before you are two months older, you'll have a bigger balance to the credit of Titus Culpepper than you've ever had yet. Oh yes, I know perfectly well what I'm about."

"I'm very glad to hear it, I'm sure," said the banker with a dubious cough. "I think we shall have some rain before morning. Good night, Mr. Bristow. Very pleased to have made your acquaintance. Hope we shall meet again."

The banker took counsel with himself as he was being driven home by his son. "I think it will be advisable to send Edward to New York for a couple of months," he thought. "In case the worst comes to the worst, the affair can then be broken off without scandal. The squire's playing some underhand game which will bring him to grief if he's not very, very careful. Meanwhile, all I can do is to wait and watch."

Strange to say, Tom Bristow's dreams that night were of Jane Culpepper. "I wonder whether she dreamed about me," he murmured to himself next morning as he was stropping his razor. "Not likely. And I was no better than a fool to dream about her."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AT ALDER COTTAGE.

Tom Bristow seldom let a day pass over without seeing Lionel Dering. Sometimes he accompanied Mr. Hoskyns to the prison, sometimes he went alone. The lawyer and he held many long consultations together as to the probable result of the trial. They could not conceal from themselves that there was grave cause for apprehension. The weight of circumstantial evidence that would be brought to bear against Lionel was almost overwhelming; while, on the other hand, not a single tittle of evidence was forthcoming which tended to implicate any other person. Notwithstanding all this, Tom was as morally convinced of his friend's innocence as he was of his own existence. Mr. Hoskyns, in his way, was equally positive. He felt sure that Lionel had not knowingly committed the crime, but he thought it just possible that he might have done it in a fit of mental aberration, without retaining the least recollection of it afterwards. In the annals of criminal jurisprudence such cases are by no means unknown. And this was the supposition on which the eminent counsel whom he had retained for the trial seemed inclined to base his argument for the defence. Hoskyns had engaged a detective from Scotland Yard, and had left no stone unturned in his efforts to lift at least some portion of the dreadful weight of evidence from off his client's shoulders, but up to the present time all such efforts had been utterly in vain. That there might possibly be some foul conspiracy on foot to get rid of Lionel was an idea that for a little while found a lodging in the lawyer's mind. But in all the wide world, as far as he knew, there was only one person who would be benefited by the death of Lionel Dering. That person was Mr. Kester St. George, and of evidence implicating him in the murder there was absolutely none. It was currently reported that he was lying seriously ill in London, which accounted for his not having been seen in Duxley since the day of the inquest.

The shock of his friend Osmond's dreadful death, taken in conjunction with the terrible accusation against his cousin, and the fact that he himself had been called upon to give evidence at the inquest, was considered by the gossips of the little town amply sufficient to account for Mr. St. George's illness. It was to be hoped that his health would be restored before the day appointed for his cousin's trial, he being one of the chief witnesses who would be called on that important occasion.

Tom Bristow was obliged to confess himself beaten, as Mr. Hoskyns had been beaten before him. There was a mystery about the case which he was totally unable to fathom. His conviction of his friend's innocence never wavered for a single moment, and yet when he asked himself: How came the jet stud into Osmond's hand? How came the

stains on Dering's shirt? he felt himself utterly unable to suggest any answer that would satisfy his own reason, or that would be likely to satisfy the reason of a judge and jury. It was very easy to say that Dering must be the victim of some foul conspiracy, but unless some proof, however faint, could be advanced of the existence of some such plot, his assertion would go for nothing, or be set down as the unwarranted utterance of a too partial friend.

Tom had not been half an hour in Lionel's company before he knew all about his friend's marriage, and next day he called on Edith with a note of introduction from her husband. Edith had heard so much, at different times, about Bristow, that she welcomed him with unfeigned gladness, and he, on his side, was deeply impressed with the sweet earnestness and womanly tenderness of her disposition. He was not long in perceiving that Edith altogether failed to realize the full measure of her husband's danger. She talked as if his acquittal were a matter that admitted of no dispute; and on one occasion, Tom found her busy sketching out the plan of a Continental tour for Lionel and herself on which they were to start the day after the trial should be over. It made Tom's heart ache to see how sanguine she was; but, as yet, the necessity for undeceiving her had not arisen.

Mrs. Garside and Edith were living in quiet lodgings in a quiet part of the town. They had brought one servant with them—Martha Vince by name, from whom they had few or no secrets. Martha had been Edith's nurse, and had lived with her ever since, and hoped to stay with her till she died. To the world at large she seemed nothing more than a shrewd, hard-working, money-saving woman; but Edith knew well the faithful and affectionate heart that beat behind the plain exterior of Martha Vince.

The life led by the two ladies was necessarily a very lonely one, and they had no wish that it should be otherwise. They never went out, except to the prison, or to take a walk for health's sake through the quiet fields at the back of the town. They were always closely veiled when they went abroad, and to the people of Duxley their features were absolutely unknown. Mr. Hoskyns and Tom were their only visitors—their only friends in those dark hours of adversity.

"I am going to make a very singular request to-day," said Tom one afternoon, when he called to see the ladies as usual. "It is to ask you to give up these very comfortable rooms and transfer yourselves and baggage to Alder Cottage, a pleasant little furnished house, not more than half a mile from here, which just now happens to be to let."

"But my dear Mr. Bristow ——" began Mrs. Garside.

"One moment, my dear Mrs. Garside," interrupted Tom, "I have another request to make: that you will not at present ask me my reasons for counselling this removal. You shall have them in a week or ten days without asking. Can you trust me till then?"

"Implicitly," answered Edith, with fervour. "When may we go and view our new home?"

"Now—to-morrow—any time. Only take the cottage, and don't be more than a week before you are installed there."

They were installed there in less than a week, despite Mrs. Garside's mild protestations that she couldn't, for the life of her, understand why that strange Mr. Bristow should want them to give up their comfortable apartments for a dull old house that looked for all the world as if it were haunted, and was built in such an out-of-the-way place that to live there was really very little better than being buried alive. But Edith's faith in Tom was not to be shaken. She felt sure that he would not have asked them to take up their quarters in Alder Cottage without having good reasons for proposing such a removal. What those reasons were she was naturally somewhat anxious to know, but she hid her impatience from Tom, and waited with smiling resignation till it should please him to tell her the secret which she felt sure was lying perdu in his brain. That there was a secret she could not doubt, because Tom had stipulated that she should not even hint to Lionel that the change of residence had been instigated by him.

Tom was not at all like his usual self about this time. He was restless and uneasy, and seemed to have lost all relish for the ordinary avocations of his every-day life. There were days when he seemed as if he would give anything to get away from the company of his own thoughts, when he would hunt up some acquaintances of former years, whom he would invite to his rooms, and keep there with pressing hospitality till far into the small hours of morning. At other times he would lie on the sofa for hours together, brooding in darkness and solitude; and his landlady, going in about midnight with a light, would find him lying there, broad awake, with a look in his eyes which told her that his thoughts were far away.

Strange to say, the person whom Tom Bristow most frequently invited to his rooms was Jabez Creede, Mr. Hoskyns' dissipated clerk. As already stated, Tom had known Creede when he himself was a youth in the same office, but the two men were so dissimilar in every respect that that of itself did not seem sufficient to account for the intimacy which now existed between them—an intimacy which was evidently of Tom's own seeking.

Creede, whose life seemed to be one chronic round of debt and dissipation, would have been friendly with anybody who would have used him as Tom used him—who would have played cribbage with him so badly that he, Creede, always rose from the table a winner; and who would have treated him to unlimited supplies of tobacco, and innumerable glasses of Irish whiskey, hot and strong.

Tom would never allow Creede to leave his rooms till he was intoxicated, not that the latter ever seemed particularly anxious to go

before that happy consummation was arrived at. But Tom was so abstemious a mortal himself that the fact of his encouraging Creede to drink to excess was somewhat singular. "What a horror the fellow is!" he muttered, as he watched Creede go staggering down the street after one of their evenings together. "But he will answer my purpose better than anyone else I could have chosen."

During the three weeks preceding Lionel's trial, Tom went to London about half-a-dozen times. He used to go up in the morning and come back in the evening. One morning he called at Alder Cottage on his way to the railway station. "I am going up to town to-day," he said, "and while there I mean to buy and send you a certain article of furniture."

"Very thoughtful on your part, Mr. Bristow," said Edith with a smile. "But would you mind telling me what the article in question is?"

"It is a mahogany wardrobe, and it has been made to fit into the recess in your dressing-room."

"But I am not in want of a wardrobe, whether made of mahogany or of any other wood," said Edith, with a puzzled look.

"That doesn't matter in the least. I shall buy it and send it all the same. The fact is, I ordered it when I was in London a fortnight ago I got Martha Vince to give me the measurement of the recess in which I want it to be fixed."

Edith was mystified, but she had such implicit faith in Tom that she never demurred to anything he either said or did.

Two days later the wardrobe arrived. Tom in person had superintended its removal from the truck to the van at the railway station, and he was at Alder Cottage to receive it. The porters, by Tom's instructions, carried it as far as the landing upstairs, and there left it.

"It now remains to be unpacked," said Tom, "and then Martha and I, with Mrs. Dering's permission, will try to fix it in the corner it is intended to occupy."

"But why not have kept the railway men to unpack and fix it?" asked Mrs. Garside.

"Because there is a little secret connected with this wardrobe," answered Tom, "of which we four alone must possess the key."

"I like secrets," said Mrs. Garside. "It is so delightful to know something that nobody else knows."

So the wardrobe was unpacked, and proved to be a very handsome and substantial piece of furniture indeed. It tested their united strength to move it into the position it was to occupy, but when once there, they found that it fitted the recess exactly.

"Now for the secret!" said Mrs. Garside, as she sat down panting on a chair.

"Suppose we adjourn downstairs," said Tom. "I have much to say to you."

His tone was very grave. The colour faded out of Edith's cheeks as he spoke. Her sensitive heart took alarm in a moment.

As soon as Mrs. Garside, Edith, and Tom had entered the parlour, Martha Vince discreetly shut the door upon them, and went back to her work in the kitchen.

"First of all," began Tom, "I must ask you whether your servant, Martha Vince, has your entire confidence."

"My full and entire confidence," answered Edith, without a minute's hesitation. "There is no more faithful creature breathing."

"My own idea of her exactly," said Tom. "Such being the case, it will be as well that she should hear what I have to say to you."

So the bell was rung, and Martha was summoned to join the consultation in the parlour.

"Some of my proceedings must have appeared very strange to you, Mrs. Dering," said Tom, addressing himself to Edith. "If, at times, I have seemed over intrusive, I must claim your forgiveness on the score of my thorough disinterestedness. In all that I have done, I have been actuated by one motive only: that motive was the welfare of my dear friend Lionel Dering."

"I believe you, from my heart," said Edith, earnestly. "But indeed, no such apology was needed—no apology at all."

Mrs. Garside coughed a dubious little cough. Really, that strange Mr. Bristow was more strange than usual this afternoon.

"In all the affairs of this life," went on Tom, "it is best never to expect too much: it is good to be prepared to face the worst."

"Ah!" said Edith, with a quivering, long-drawn sigh. "Now I begin to understand you."

"The day fixed for Dering's trial is at hand: the weight of evidence against him is terribly strong: no human being can say what the result may be." He spoke very slowly and very gravely, and the faces of his listeners blanched as they heard him.

"And I—heaven help me!" faltered Edith, "was foolish enough to think that, because he is innocent, he could not fail to be acquitted!"

"Of his innocence we are all perfectly satisfied. But the jury will also have to be satisfied of it. And therein lies the difficulty. Unless some strong evidence in his favour be forthcoming at the trial, it is just possible—mind, I only say, just possible—that—that—in short, that it may go somewhat hard with him."

"My darling child, this is indeed a dreadful revelation!" sobbed Mrs. Garside.

But Edith neither sobbed nor spoke. She sat perfectly still, with white, drawn face, and with staring horror-full eyes, that, gazing through the wide-open window, far away into the peaceful evening sky, seemed to see there some terrible vision of doom, unseen of all the others.

"Oh dear! dear!" cried Mrs. Garside, "What a pity it is that you would insist on getting married!"

The words roused Edith from her waking trance. "I thank heaven doubly now that I was enabled to become the wife of Lionel Dering! If—if I must indeed lose him, he will still be mine beyond the grave. Our parting will not be for long. We shall——" She could say no more. She rose hastily, and went to the window, and stood there till her composure had in some measure come back to her.

"You have something more to tell me, Mr. Bristow," she said, as she went back to her chair after a little while.

"How sorry I am to have distressed you so much!" said Tom, with real feeling.

"Do not speak of that now, please. You have told me the truth, and I am grateful to you for it. I have been living too long in a fool's paradise."

"But you must not give way to despair. Dering's case is by no means a hopeless one, and I should not have said what I have said to you this afternoon, had I not been compelled to do so by another and a most important reason."

Edith looked at him rather wearily, as if anything that he might now say could have only the faintest possible interest for her.

"As I said before," resumed Tom, "it is always wise to prepare for the worst, although that worst may possibly never come. And this was the object I had in view, firstly, when I induced you to leave your lodgings in Duxley and come to live in this lonely little house; and, secondly, when I had that piece of furniture made for you which we have just unpacked upstairs."

Edith's attention was keen enough now. "You speak in parables!" she said with pitiful eagerness.

"In one moment I will enlighten you," said Tom. He leaned forward and spoke slowly and impressively, so that every word might be heard by his three auditors. "If I find that the result of the trial is likely to be adverse to Lionel Dering, it is my fixed intention to assist him to escape from prison, and to hide him from pursuit in this very house!"

Mrs. Garside and Martha sat staring at Tom when he had done speaking as though they believed him to be mad. Edith's heart gave a great sob in which hope, and joy, and fear were commingled.

"The first thing was to get you out of lodgings," resumed Tom. "While you were there, it would have been impossible for you to hide anybody. Fortunately, this house was to let. It is secluded, and not overlooked from the windows of any other house, and consequently, admirably adapted for the purpose I have in view. But in the house itself it was necessary to find some special hiding-place—some nook that would be safe from the prying eyes of the most acute

and experienced police officer. Many were the hours I spent in cogitating over one scheme after another. The result was that I could think of no safer place in which to hide an escaped prisoner than my mahogany wardrobe."

"Hide him in a wardrobe!" exclaimed Mrs. Garside, in dismay. "Why, that would be one of the first places a police officer would look into."

"Precisely so," said Tom. "He might look into it a dozen times if he liked, and still he should not see all that it held. But we will go upstairs again, and the mystery shall be elucidated."

So they went upstairs again to Edith's dressing-room, and Tom flung wide open the doors of the wardrobe. The ladies had seen similar articles of furniture scores of times before, and this one seemed in no wise different from any other. There was a shelf near the top; and below the shelf were the usual pegs, on which to hang articles of clothing: and that was all. Disappointment was plainly visible on every face.

Tom smiled, and gave one of the brass pegs a downward pull. As he did so, they could hear the click of a little bolt as it shot back into its socket. Then the back of the wardrobe, from the shelf downwards, yielding to Tom's hand, opened slowly outwards on hidden hinges, disclosing, as it did so, a space sufficiently large for a man to stand upright in between itself—when shut—and the real back.

In order to illustrate thoroughly the use to which it was intended to put it, Tom stepped into the recess, and pulling the false back towards him, shut himself in. Seeing the wardrobe thus, no one would ever have suspected that anything was hidden in it. By pulling a ring, the person inside could open the door of his temporary prison, so that any one could step in and out at will, and almost as easily as if were simply going out of one room into another. Tom then explained the mechanism of the wardrobe, so that there could be no possible mistake should the necessity for using it ever arise. The recess in which the wardrobe stood was a very deep one, and this it was which had first given him the idea of utilizing it in the way described.

"This is the place in which I intend to hide Lionel Dering," said Tom, as he shut the wardrobe doors, "should his innocence not be proved at his trial, and should I succeed in effecting his escape from Duxley gaol."

"But about his escape," said Mrs. Garside. "May I ask——" and then she stopped.

"Don't ask me anything at present, my dear madam," said Tom. "My scheme is hardly clear to my own mind as yet." Then, turning to Edith, he added, "But for all that, I hope that a day or two more will see it thoroughly perfected. Time enough then to trouble you with whatever other details it may be necessary for you to know."

"Some people say that the grand old days when Friendship was something more than an empty name are dead and gone for ever. I will never believe them when they tell me so in time to come."

So spoke Edith to Tom as they stood together for a moment at the door ere the latter took his leave.

"Dering saved my life," answered Tom, simply. "But for his brave heart, and his strong arm, the hand you now clasp in yours, and the body to which it belongs, would be mouldering at the bottom of the sea, or else have been buried by strangers in some nameless grave. Can such a service be readily forgotten?"

As Tom was walking through the town towards his lodgings he overtook Hoskyns. They walked down the street together, talking about the trial, which was fixed for the following Monday. Mr. Baldry, the wine and spirit merchant, was standing at the door of his counting-house as they approached. Judging from the appearance of Mr. Baldry's face, most people would have concluded that he was rather too fond of his own stock in trade, and most people would have been right in their supposition. Hoskyns stopped to speak to him, and proffered his snuff-box as usual. Tom nodded to him.

"You can send me another dozen of that claret—the same as the last," said Hoskyns. "That is, if you have any of it left in stock."

"I'll make an effort to find enough for an old friend," said Baldry, facetiously. "By-the-by," he added, "since how long a time is it that you have taken to rambling by moonlight along lonely country roads after ten o'clock at night?"

"I have not the remotest idea, Baldry, what you are talking about," said Hoskyns, a little stiffly.

"Oh, come now, among old friends that won't do, you know. Whether you're in love or not is best known to yourself. But it certainly did strike me as something out of the common way to see you walking all alone, between ten and eleven last night, under the lime trees on the Thornfield road."

"You speak in riddles," said Hoskyns. "I have not set foot on the Thornfield road for months."

Baldry stared at the lawyer, then rubbed his eyes, and then stared again. "Draw it mild, old friend," he said quietly. "Don't think for one moment that I want to pry into your private affairs, but I certainly thought there was no harm in my mentioning where I met you last night, especially as you seemed to make no secret of it yourself."

"I tell you again that I don't understand what you are driving at," said Hoskyns, testily. "I tell you again that I have not set foot on the Thornfield road for months."

"Look here," said Baldry, and an angry flush overspread his face, making it redder than before, "do you mean to stand there and tell me in cold blood that you didn't stop me on the Thornfield road last night,

as I was driving home between ten and eleven? That you didn't shout out to me: 'Hullo, Baldry, is that you, old boy?' That I didn't stop the mare for five minutes, while we talked about the weather and such like? That you didn't offer me your box, and that I didn't take out of it a pinch of that identical snuff which nobody but you in all Duxley makes use of? Do you mean to stand and tell me all that?"

"Baldry," said Hoskyns, "for you to make such a statement as that is to prove that last night you must have been either crazy or drunk. Last night I never left the house after eight o'clock; as my servant could certify on oath. And as for the Thornfield road, I tell you once more that I have not set foot on it since last Christmas."

"Ned," shouted Baldry to someone inside, "come you here a minute."

The summons was responded to by a yellow-haired youth of sixteen.

"At what hour did I reach home last night?" asked Baldry.

"The clock had just struck eleven as you drove into the yard," answered Ned.

"Did I tell you, or did I not, that I had stopped and spoken to someone a few minutes previously?"

"You said that you had just parted from Lawyer Hoskyns. That you had had five minutes' talk with him, and a pinch out of his box," answered the lad, without a moment's hesitation.

"There! what did I tell you?" said Baldry, triumphantly.

"Baldry, I give you my word of honour," said Hoskyns, "that was not out of the house after eight o'clock, and that I never met you yesterday at all—indeed, I've not seen you to speak to you for nearly a week."

"Evidently a case of mistaken identity," said Tom.

"Mistaken identity be hanged!" said the irate wine merchant. "How about the snuff-box? Could I be mistaken in that? Not likely. No—no. I respect old friends, but I'll take the evidence of my own senses in preference to any man's word, however long I've known him." And with these words, Baldry retired into the recesses of his counting-house, and shut the door behind him with a bang.

Hoskyns and Tom resumed their walk down the street.

"An extraordinary circumstance, very," said the lawyer. "I am quite at a loss how to explain it."

"Baldry was always noted as being fond of his own spirits, wasn't he?" asked Tom.

"He was indeed, poor man: and I am afraid the habit clings to him still. He must have been in liquor last evening. That is the only way in which I can account for his hallucination."

*(To be continued.)*

## SANDSTONE TORR.

MR. DUFFHAM the surgeon stood making up pills and powders in his surgery at Church Dykely, the mahogany counter before him, the shelves filled with glass bottles of coloured liquids behind him. Weighing out grains of this and that in the small scales that rested beside the large ones, both sets at the end of the counter, was he, and measuring out drops with a critical eye. The day promised to be piping-hot, and his summer house-coat, of slate-coloured twill, was thrown back on his shoulders. Spare and wiry little man though he was, he felt the heat. He was rather wondering that no patients had come in yet, for people knew that this was the time to catch him, before he started on his rounds, and he generally had an influx on Monday morning.

Visitor the first. The surgery-door, standing close to the open front one, was tapped at, and a tall, bony woman entered, dressed in a big straw bonnet with primrose ribbons, a blue cotton gown and cotton shawl. Eunice Gibbon, Mrs. Stephen Radcliffe's sister.

"Good morning, Mr. Duffham," she said, lodging her basket on the counter. "I be frightfully out o' sorts, sir, and think I sha'n't be right till I've took a bottle or two o' physic."

"Sit down," said the doctor, coming in front of the counter, preparatory to inquiring into the sick symptoms.

She sat down in one of the two chairs: and Duffham, after sundry questions, told her that her liver was out of order. She answered that she could have told him that, for nothing but "liver" was ever the matter with her. He went behind the counter again to make up a bottle of some delectable stuff good for the complaint, and Eunice sat waiting for it, when the surgery door was pushed open with a whirl and a bang, and Tod and I burst in. To see Eunice Gibbon there, took us aback. It seemed a very curious coincidence, considering what we had come about.

"Well, young gentlemen," quoth Duffham, looking rather surprised, and detecting our slight discomfiture, "does either of you want my services?"

"Yes," said Tod, boldly; "Johnny does: he has a headache. We'll wait, Mr. Duffham."

Leaning on the counter, we watched the progress of the making-up in silence, Duffham exchanging a few words with Eunice Gibbon at intervals. Suddenly he opened upon a subject that caused Tod to give me a private dig with his elbow.

"And how were the cries last night?" asked Duffham. "Did you hear much of them?"

"There was no cries last night," answered Eunice—which brought me another dig from Tod. "But wasn't the wind high! It went a shrieking round the Torr like so many mad cats.—Two spoonfuls twice a day, did you say, sir?"

"Three times a day. I am putting the directions on the bottle. You will soon feel better."

"I've been subject to these nasty bilious turns all my life," she said, speaking to me and Tod. "But I don't know when I've had as bad a one as this.—Thank ye, sir."

Taking the bottle of physic, she put it into her basket, said good morning, and went away. Duffham came to the front, and Tod jumped on the counter and sat there facing us, his long legs dangling. I had taken one of the chairs.

"Mr. Duffham, what do you think we have come about?" began Tod, dropping his voice to a mysterious key. "Don't you go and faint away when you hear it."

"Faint away!" retorted old Duffham.

"I'll be shot if it would not send some people into a faint! That Gibbon woman has just said that no cries were to be heard last night."

"Well?"

"Well, there *were* cries; plenty of them. And awful cries they were. I, and Johnny, and Mrs. Frank Radcliffe—yes, she was with us—stood in that precious field listening to them till our blood ran cold. *You* heard them, you know, on Saturday night."

"Well?" repeated Duffham, staring at Tod.

"Look here. We have found it out—and have come over to tell you—and to ask you what can be done," went on Tod earnestly, jumping off the counter and putting his back against the door to make sure of non-interruption. "The cries come from Frank Radcliffe. He is not dead."

"What?" shouted Duffham, who had turned to face Tod and stood in the middle of the oil-cloth, wondering whether Tod was demented.

"Frank is no more dead than I am. I'd lay my life upon it. Stephen Radcliffe has got him shut up in the Tower; and the piteous cries are his—crying for release."

"Bless my heart and mind!" exclaimed Duffham, backing right against the big scales. "Frank Radcliffe alive and shut up in the Tower! But there's no way to the Tower. He could not be got into it."

"I don't care. I know he is there. That huzzy, now gone out, does well to say no cries were abroad last night; her business is to throw people off the scent. But I tell you, Duffham, the cries never were so loud or so piteous, and I heard what they said as distinctly as

you can hear me speak now. 'Help! help! Frank Radcliffe!' they said. And I swear the voice was Frank's own."

"If ever I heard the like of this!" ejaculated Duffham. "It is really not—not to be credited."

"The sound of the cries comes out on the air through the openings in the tower," ran on Tod, in excitement. "Oh, he is there, poor fellow, safe enough. And to think what long months he has been kept there, Stephen's prisoner! Twelve. Twelve, as I'm alive.—Now, look you here, Duffham! you are staring like an unbeliever."

"It's not altogether that—that I don't believe," said Duffham, whose wide-open eyes were staring considerably. "I am thinking what is to be done about it—how to set the question at rest."

Tod left the door unguarded and flung himself into the other chair. He went over the whole narrative quietly: how Mrs. Frank Radcliffe—who had been listening to the cries for a week past—had first put him into a puzzle, how he had then heard the words and the voice, and how the true explanation came flashing into his mind later. With every sentence, Duffham grew more convinced, and at last he believed it as much as we did.

"And now how is he to be got out?" concluded Tod.

Holding a council together, we decided that the first step must be to get a magistrate's order to search the Torr. That involved the disclosure of the facts to the magistrate—whosoever he might be. Mr. Brandon was pitched upon: Duffham proposed the Squire at first; but, as Tod pointed out, the Squire would be sure to go to work in some hot and headlong manner, and perhaps ruin all. Let Stephen Radcliffe get only half an inkling of what was up, and he might contrive to convey Frank off to the ends of the earth.

All three of us started at once, Duffham leaving his patients for that one morning to doctor themselves, and found Mr. Brandon at breakfast. He had been distracted with face-ache all night he said, which caused him to rise late. The snow-white table-cloth was set off with flowers and plate, but the fare was not luxurious. The silver jug held plenty of new milk, the silver tea-pot a modicum of the weakest of tea, the silver rack the dryest of dry toast. A boiled egg and the butter dish remained untouched. One of the windows was thrown up wide to the summer air, and to the scent from the clustering flower beds and the hum of the bees dipping over them to sip their sweets.

Breaking off little bits of toast, and eating them slowly, Mr. Brandon listened to the tale. He did not take it in. That was check the first. And he would not grant a warrant to search the Torr. That was check the second.

"Stephen Radcliffe is bad enough in the ways of being sullen and miserly," said he. "But as to daring such a thing as this, I don't think

he would. Pass his brother off to the world for dead, and put him into his house and keep him there in concealment! No. Nobody of common sense would believe it."

Tod set on again, giving our experience of the past night, earnestly protesting that he had recognised Frank's voice, and heard the words it said—'Help! Frank Radcliffe!' He added that Annet Radcliffe, Frank's widow—or wife, whichever it might turn out to be—had been listening to the cries for days past and knew them for her husband's: only she, poor daft woman, took them to come from his ghost. Mr. Brandon sipped his tea and listened. Duffham followed on: saying that when he heard the cries on Saturday night, in passing the Torr on his way from the Court, he could then almost have staked his existence upon their being human cries, proceeding from some human, living being in distress, but for the apparent impossibility of such a thing. And I could see that an impression was at length made on Mr. Brandon.

"If Stephen Radcliffe has done so infamous an act, he must be more cruel, more daring than man ever was yet," remarked he, in answer. "But I must be more satisfied of it before I sign the warrant you ask for."

Well, there we sat, hammering at him. That is, *they* did. Being my guardian, I did not presume to put in a word edgeways, so far as pressing him to act went. In all that he thought right, and in spite of his quiet manner and his squeaky voice, old Brandon was a firm man, not to be turned by argument.

"But won't you grant this warrant, sir?" appealed Tod for the tenth time.

"I have told you, no," he replied. "I will not at the present stage of the affair. In any case, I should not grant it without consulting your father ——"

"He is so hot-headed," burst in Tod. "He'd be as likely as not to go off knocking at the Torr door without his hat, demanding Frank Radcliffe."

"Mr. Todhetley was Frank Radcliffe's trustee, and he is your father, young man; I do not stir a step in this matter without consulting him," returned old Brandon, coolly persistent.

Well, there was nothing for it now but to go back home and consult the Pater. It seemed like a regular damper—and we were hot and tired besides. Tod in his enthusiasm had pictured us storming the Torr at mid-day, armed with the necessary authority, and getting out Frank at once.

Mr. Brandon ordered his waggonette—a conveyance he did not like, and scarcely ever used himself, leaving it to the servants for their errands—and we all drove back to Dyke Manor, himself included. To describe the astonishment of the Pater when the disclosure was made to him

would take a strong pen. He rubbed his face, and blustered, and stared around, and then told Tod he was a fool.

"I know I am in some things," said Tod, as equably as old Brandon could have put it; "but I'm not in this. If Frank Radcliffe is not alive in that tower of Stephen's, and calling out nightly for his release, you may set me down as a fool to the end of my days, father."

"Goodness bless us all!" cried the poor bewildered Squire. "Do you believe this, Brandon?"

Mr. Brandon did not say whether he believed it or not. Both of them shook their heads about granting a warrant: upon which, Tod passionately asked whether Francis Radcliffe was to be left in the tower to die. It was finally decided that we should go in a body that night to the field again, so as to give the two doubters the benefit of hearing anything there might be to hear. And Mr. Brandon stayed with us for the day, telling his coachman to come back at night with the small pony-gig to take him home.

The moon was just as bright as on the previous night, and we started on our expedition stealthily. Tod and I went first; Duffham came strolling next; and the Squire and Mr. Brandon afterwards. Should Stephen Radcliffe or any of his people catch sight of the whole of us moving together, he might suspect there was something in the wind.

Annet did not make her appearance, which was a vast relief. For we could talk without restraint; and it would never have done to let her know what we suspected: and so raise wild hopes within her that might not be fulfilled. We knew later that her mother was at Pitchley's Farm that evening, and it kept Annet at home.

Was Heaven interfering in Frank's behalf? It does interfere for the oppressed, you know; ay, more often than we heedless and ungrateful mortals think for. Never had the cries been so plain as they were this night, though there was no wind to waft them downwards, for the air was perfectly still; and the words were distinctly heard. "Help! Help! Frank Radcliffe."

"Mercy upon us!" exclaimed the Squire, under his breath. "The voice does sound like Frank's."

Mr. Brandon was standing with his hand to his ear. Duffham leaned on his gold-headed cane, his face lifted upwards. Tod stood by in dudgeon: he was angry with them for not having believed him at first.

"I think we may grant a search warrant, Squire," said Mr. Brandon.

"And send old Jones the constable, to execute it," assented the Squire.

Tod flung back his head. "Old Jones! Much use he'd be! Why, father, Eunice Gibbon alone could settle old Jones with his shaky legs. She'd pitch him out at the first window."

"Jones can take help, Joe."

* * * * *

It was the breakfast hour at the Torr, eight o'clock. The meal was being taken in the kitchen. Less semblance of gentility than even in the former days was kept up: all usages of comfort and refinement had departed with old Mr. Radcliffe and Selina. Stephen was swallowing his eggs and rashers of bacon quickly: Tuesday is Alcester market-day, and he was going in to attend it, expecting to sell some of his newly-gathered crop of hay. Mrs. Stephen sat opposite him, eating bacon also; and Eunice Gibbon stood at the dresser, mixing some meal for the fattening of fowls. Miserly though Stephen was by nature, he liked a good table, and took care to have it.

"Could you bring some starch home, master?" asked Eunice, turning her head round to speak.

"Why can't you get your starch here?" retorted Stephen.

"Well, it's a farthing less a pound at Alcester than it is at Church Dykely," said Eunice. "They've rose it here."

Farthings were farthings in Stephen's eyes, and he supposed he might as well bring the starch. "How much is wanted of it?" he growled.

"We'd better have a pound," interposed Becca. "Half pounds don't get the benefit of the farthing: you can't split a farthing in two. Shall you be home early?" she continued to her husband.

"Don't know. Not afore afternoon."

"Because we shall want some of the starch to-day. There's none to go on with, is there, Eunice?"

"Yes, there's a bit. I can make it do."

"You'll have to wait till you get it," remarked Stephen as he pushed his plate away and rose from table. "And mind you don't forget to give the pigs their dinner."

"What'll be wanted up there to-day?" enquired Becca, pointing towards some invisible place over-head, possibly intending to indicate the tower.

"Nothing but dinner," said Stephen. "What should there be? I shall be back afore tea-time."

He went out at the back door as he spoke, gave a keen look or two around his yard and premises generally, to see that all was right, and presently trotted away on horseback. A few minutes later, Jim, the only regular man kept, was seen to cross the yard towards the lane with the horse and cart.

"Where be you off to, Jim?" demanded Becca, stalking to the door and speaking at the top of her voice.

"Master ordered me to go after that load o' manure," called back Jim, standing upright in the cart and arresting the horse for a moment.

"What, this morning?"

"It's what he telled me."

"Well, don't go and make a day's work of it," commanded Mrs. Stephen. "There's a sight o' things a waiting to be done."

"I can't be back afore two, hasten as I 'ool," returned Jim, giving the horse his head and clattering off.

"I wonder what the master sent him to-day for, when he's away himself?" cried Becca to her sister, returning to the table in the kitchen.

"Well, he got a message last night to say that if he didn't send for it away to-day it wouldn't be kept for him," said Eunice. "It's a precious long way to have to go for a load o' manure!"

"But then we get it for the fetching; there's naught to pay," returned Becca.

She had begun to wash up the breakfast things, and when that was done she put the kitchen to rights. Eunice seemed to be at all kinds of jobs, indoors and out, and went stalking about in pattens. The furnace had been lighted in the brewhouse, for Eunice had a day's washing before her. Becca went up to make the beds, and brought down sundry armfuls of clothes for the wash. About ten o'clock she appeared in the brewhouse with her bonnet and shawl on. Eunice was standing at the tub in her pattens, rubbing away at the steaming soap-suds.

"Why, where be you going?" she exclaimed in evident surprise.

"I'm a going over to Dick's to fetch Beccy," replied Mrs. Stephen. "It's a long while since she was here—Ste don't care to see children about the place. The child shall stop to dinner with us and can go home by herself in the afternoon.—What's the matter now, Eunice Gibbon? Don't it please ye?"

"Oh it pleases me well enough," returned Eunice, who was looking anything *but* pleased, and splashing both hands desperately about in the water, over one of Stephen's coloured cotton handkerchiefs. "The child can come, and welcome, for me. 'Tain't that."

"It's some'at else then," remarked Becca.

"Well, I'd wanted to get a bit o' talk with ye," said Eunice "That's what it is. The master's safe off, and it was a good opportunity for it."

"What about?"

Eunice Gibbon took her hands out of the soap-suds and rested them on the sides of the tub, while she answered—coming to the point at once.

"I've been a thinking that I can't stop on here, Becca. I bain't at ease. Many a night lately I have laid awake over it. If anything comes out about—you know what—we might all of us get into trouble."

"No fear," said Becca.

"Well, I says there is fear. Folks have talked long enough; but it strikes me they won't be satisfied with talking much longer: they'll be

searching out. Only yesterday morning when I was waiting at Duffham's while he mixed up the stuff, he must begin upon it. 'Did ye hear the cries last night?' says he—or something o' that. 'No,' says I in answer; 'there was none to hear, only the wind.' Them two young gents from the Manor was there, cocking up their ears at the words. *I* see 'em."

Rebecca Radcliffe remained silent. Truth to tell, she and Stephen were getting afraid of the cries themselves. That is, of what the cries might result in.

"He ought to be got away," resumed Eunice.

"But there's no means o' getting him away."

"Well, I can't feel comfortable, Becca; not safe, you know. So don't you and the master be put out if I walks myself off one o' these here first fine days. When I come here, I didn't bargain for nothing o' this sort."

"There's no danger of ill turning up," flashed Becca, braving out the matter with scorn. "The cries is took to come from the birds: who is to pick up any other notion, d'ye suppose? I'll tell ye what it is, Eunice: that jaundiced liver of yours is tormenting you. You'll be afeared next of your own shadda."

"Perhaps it is," acknowledged Eunice, dropping the argument and resuming her rubbing. "I know that precious physic of old Duffham's is upsetting me. It's the nausiousest stuff I ever took."

Mrs. Stephen stalked out of the kitchen and betook herself across the fields, towards her brother's. Richard Gibbon had succeeded to his late father's post of gamekeeper to the Chavasses. The gamekeeper's lodge was more than a mile away; and Mrs. Stephen strode off, out of sight, unconscious of what was in store for the Torr.

Eunice went on with her washing, deep in thought. She had fully made up her mind to quit the Torr; but she meant to break the fact by degrees to its master and mistress. Drying her hands for the temporary purpose of stirring-up and putting more slack on the furnace fire, she was interrupted by a gentle ring at the front door bell.

"Why, who on earth's that?" she exclaimed aloud. "Oh, it must be Lizzy," with a flush of recollection: "she sent word she should be over to-day or to-morrow. How early she have got here!"

Free of all suspicion, glancing at no ill, Eunice went through the passages and opened the front door. Quite a small crowd of people stood there, and one or two of them pushed in immediately. Mr. Duffham, Tod, I, the Squire, old Jones, and old Jones's man, who was young, and active on his legs. The Squire *would* come, and we were unable to hinder him.

"In the Queen's name!" cried old Jones—who always used that formula on state occasions. And Eunice Gibbon screamed long and loud.

To oppose our entrance was not to be thought of. We had entered and could not be thrust back again. Eunice took to her heels up the passage, and confronted us at the parlour door with a pair of tongs. Duffham and Tod disarmed her. She then flew to the kitchen, sat down, and went into hysterics. Old Jones read out the authority for the search, but she only screamed the louder.

They left her to get out of the screaming at her leisure, and went up aloft, seeking the entrance to the tower. It was found without much difficulty: Tod was the one to see it first. A small door (only discovered by Stephen Radcliffe since his father's death, as we heard later) led from a dark and unused lumber-room to the narrow stairs of the tower. In its uppermost compartment, a little, round den, sat Frank Radcliffe, chained to the wall.

Not at once could we take in the features of the scene; for, all the light came in through the one long narrow opening, a framed slit without glass, that was set in the deep round wall of the tower. A mattress was spread on the floor, with a pillow and blankets; one chair stood close to a box that served for a table, on which he no doubt eat his meals, for there were plates and food on it; another box, its lid open, was in a corner, and on the other chair sat Frank. That was every earthly article the place contained. It was through that opening—you could not call it a window—that Frank's cries for help had gone forth to the air. There he sat, the chain round his waist, turning his amazed eyes upon us.

And raving mad, you ask? No. He was all skin and bone, and his fair hair hung down like that of a wild man of the woods, but he was as sane as you or I. He rose up, the chain clanking, and then we saw that it was long enough to admit of his moving about to any part of the den.

"Oh, God bless you, Frank!—we have come to release you," burst forth the Squire, impetuously seizing both his hands. "God help you, my poor lad!" And Frank, what with surprise and the not being over stout, burst into joyous tears.

The ingenious scheme of taking possession of Frank, and representing him as dead, that he might enjoy all the money, had occurred to Stephen Radcliffe when he found Frank was recovering under Dr. Dale's treatment. During the visits Stephen paid to London at that time, he and Pitt, Dr. Dale's head man, became very intimate: and when Pitt was discharged from Dr. Dale's they grew more so. Stephen Radcliffe would not perhaps have done any harm to Frank in the shape of poison or a dagger, being no more of a killer or slayer of men than were his neighbours; but to keep him concealed in the Torr, so as to reap the benefit himself of all the money, he looked upon as a very venial crime indeed—quite justifiable, so to say. Especially, if he

could escape being found out. And this fine scheme he perfected and put in practice, and carried successfully through.

How much of it he confided to Pitt, or how much he did not, will never be known. Certain it was, that Pitt wrote the letter announcing Frank's death; though we could not find out that he had helped it in any other way. But a very curious coincidence attended the affair; one that aided Stephen's plans materially; and but for its happening I do not see that they could have succeeded when enquiries were made. In the London house where Stephen lodged (Gibraltar Terrace, that I and the Squire had a two days' hunt to find) there came to live a young man, who was taken ill close upon his entrance with a malady arising from his habits of drinking. Pitt, coming often to Gibraltar Terrace then with Stephen Radcliffe, took to attend on the young man out of good nature, doing for him all that could be done. It was this young man who died, and was buried in Finchley Cemetery; and of whose death the landlady with the faded face and black silk apron spoke to the Squire, thereby establishing in our minds the misapprehension that it was Francis Radcliffe. Stephen did not take Frank to the lodgings at all; he brought him straight down to the Torr when he was released from Dr. Dale's, taking care to get out at a remote country station at the dusk of evening, where his own gig, conveyed thither by Becca, was in waiting. He laid his plans well, that crafty Stephen! And, once he had got Frank securely into that upper den, he might just have kept him there for life, but for that blessed outlet in the wall, and nobody been any the wiser.

Stephen Radcliffe did not bargain for that. It nearly always happens that in doing an ill deed we overreach ourselves in some fatal way. Knowing that no sound, though it were loud enough to awaken the seven sleepers, could penetrate from that upper room through the massive walls of the house, and be heard below, Stephen thought his secret was safe, and that Frank might call out, if he would, until Doomsday. It never occurred to him that the cries could get out through that unglazed window in the tower wall, and set the neighbourhood agog with curiosity. They did, however: and Stephen, whatever amount of dread it might have brought his heart, was unable to stop them. Not until Frank had been for some months chained in his den, did it occur to himself to make those cries, so hopeless was he of their being heard below to any good purpose. But one winter night when the wind was howling outside, and the sound of it came booming into his ears through the window, it struck him that he might be heard though that very opening; and from that time his voice was raised in supplication evening after evening. Stephen could do nothing. He dared not brick the opening up lest some suspicion or other should be excited outside; he could not remove Frank, for there was no other secret room to remove him to, or where his cries would not

have been heard below. He ordered Frank to be still : he threatened him ; he once took a horsewhip to him and laid it about his shoulders. All in vain. When Frank was alone, his cries for release never ceased. Stephen and his household put it upon the birds and the wind, and what not ; but they got to dread it : and Stephen, even at this time, of discovery, was perpetually ransacking his brains for some safe means of departing for Canada and carrying Frank with him. The difficulty lay in conveying Frank out of the Torr and away. They might drug him for the bare exit, but they could not keep him drugged perpetually ; they could not hinder him coming in contact with his fellow men on the journey and transit, and Frank had a tongue in his head. No : Stephen saw no hope, no safety, but in keeping him where he was.

"But how could you allow yourself to be brought up here?—and fastened to a stake in this shameful fashion?" was nearly the first question of the Squire when he could collect his senses : and he asked it with just a touch of temper, for he was beginning to think that Frank, in permitting it, must have been as simple as the fool in a travelling circus.

"He got me up by stratagem," answered Frank, tossing his long hair as far back from his face as it would go. "While we were sitting at supper the night we arrived here, he began talking about the wonderful discovery he had made of the staircase and opening to the tower. Naturally I was interested ; and when Stephen proposed to show it me at once, I assented gladly. Becca came with us, saying she'd carry the candle. We got up here, and were all three standing in the middle of the floor, just where we are standing now, when I suddenly had a chain—this chain—slipped round my waist, and found myself fastened to the wall here, a prisoner."

"But why did you come to the Torr at all?" stamped the Squire, while old Jones stretched out his two hands, as if putting imaginary handcuffs on Stephen's. "Why did you not go at once to your own home—or come to us? When you knew you were going to leave Dale's, why didn't you write to say so?"

"After events are passed we perceive the mistakes we have made, though we do not see them at the time," answered Frank, turning his blue eyes from one to the other of us. "Dr. Dale did not wish me to quit his house quite so soon ; though I was perfectly well, he said another month there would be best for me. I, however, was anxious to get away, more eager for it than I can tell you—which was only natural. Stephen whispered to me that he would accomplish it, but that I must put myself entirely in his hands, and not write to anybody down here about it. He got me out, sooner than I had thought for : sooner, as he declared, than he had thought for himself ; and he said we must break the news to Annet very cautiously, for she

was anything but strong. He proposed to take me to the Torr for the first night of my return, and give me a bed there; and the following day the communication could be made to Annet at Pitchley's farm, and then I might follow it as soon as I pleased.' It all seemed to me feasible; quite the right way of going to work; in fact, the only way: I thanked Stephen, and came down here with him in all confidence."

"Good patience!" cried the Squire. "And you had no suspicions, Frank Radcliffe!—knowing what Stephen was!"

"I never knew he would do such a dastardly deed as this. How could I know it?"

"Oh, come along!" returned the Squire, beginning to stumble down the narrow, dark stairs. "We'll have the law of him."

The key of the chain had been found hanging on a nail outside the door, out of poor Frank's reach. He was soon free; but staggered a little when he began to descend the stairs. Duffham laid hold of him behind, and Tod went before.

"Thank God! thank God!" he broke out with reverent emotion, when the bright sun burst upon him through the windows, after passing the dark lumber room. "I feared I might never see full daylight again."

"Have you any clothes?" asked Duffham. "This coat's in rags."

"I'm sure I don't know whether I have or not," replied Frank. "The coat is all I have had upon me since coming here."

"Becca's a beast," put in Tod. "And I hope Stephen will have his neck stretched."

Eunice Gibbon was nowhere to be seen below. The premises were deserted. She had made a rush to her brother's, the gamekeeper's lodge, to warn Becca of what was taking place. We started for Dyke Manor, Frank in our midst, leaving the Torr, and its household gods, including the cackling fowls and the dinnerless pigs, to their fate. Mr. Brandon met us at the second field, and he took Frank's hand in silence.

"God bless you, lad! So you have been shut up there!"

"And chained to a stake in the wall," cried the Squire.

"Well, it seems perfectly unbelievable that such a thing should take place in these later days. It reads like an episode of the dark ages."

"Won't we pay out Master Radcliffe for 't!" put in old Jones, at work with his imaginary handcuffs again. "I should say, for my part, it 'ud be a'most a case o' transportation to Botany Bay."

Frank Radcliffe was ensconced within Dyke Manor (sending Mrs. Todhetley into a shock of hysterics, for she had known nothing), and Duffham undertook the task of breaking it to Frank's wife. Frank, when his hair should have been trimmed up a little, was to put himself into a borrowed coat and to follow on presently.

Pitchley's farm and Pitchley's roses lay hot and bright under the summer sunshine. Mr. Duffham went straight in, and looked about for its mistress. In the sitting-rooms, in the kitchen, in the dairy: he and his cane, and could not see her.

"Missis have stepped out, sir," said Sally, who was scrubbing the kitchen table. "A fearful headache she have got to-day."

"A headache, has she!" responded Duffham.

"I don't think she's never without one," remarked Sally, dipping her brush into the saucer of white sand.

"Where's Mr. Skate?"

"Him? Oh, he be gone over to Alcester market, sir."

"You go and find your mistress, Sally, and say I particularly wish to speak with her. Tell her that I have some very good news for her."

Sally left her brush and her sand, and went out with the message. The doctor strolled into the best parlour, and cribbed one of the many roses intruding their blooming beauty into the open window. Mr. Duffham had to exercise his patience. It seemed to him that he waited half an hour.

Annet came in at last, saying how sorry she was to have kept him: she had stepped over to see their carter's wife, who was ill, and Sally had but just found her. She wore her morning gown of black and white print, with the small net widow's cap on her bright hair. But for the worn look in her face, the sad eyes, she was just as pretty as ever; and Duffham thought so.

"Sally says you have some good news for me," she observed with a poor, faint smile. "It must be a joke of yours, Mr. Duffham. There's no news that could be good for me."

"Wait till you hear it," said he. "You have had a fortune left you? It is *so good*, Mrs. Frank Radcliffe, that I'm afraid to tell you. You may go into a fit; or do some other foolish thing."

"Indeed no. Nothing can ever have much effect on me again."

"Don't you make too sure of that," said Duffham. "You've never felt quite sure about that death of your husband, up at Dale's, have you? Thought there was something queer about it—eh?"

"Yes," she said. "I have thought it."

"Well, some of us have been looking into it a little. And we find—in short, we are not at all sure that—that Frank did die."

"Oh!"—her hands lifting themselves in agitation—"What is it, sir? You have come to disclose to me that my husband was murdered."

"The contrariness of woman!" exclaimed Duffham, giving the floor a thump with his cane. "Why, Mrs. Frank Radcliffe, I told you as plainly as I could speak, that it was *good* news I brought. So good, that I hardly thought you could bear it with equanimity. Your husband was *not* murdered."

Poor Annet never answered a word to this. She only gazed at him.

"And our opinion is that Frank did not die at all; at Dale's, or elsewhere. Some of us think he is alive still, and—now don't you drop down in a heap."

"Please go on," she breathed, turning whiter than her own cap. "I—shall not drop down."

"We have *reason* to think it, Mrs. Frank. To think that he is alive, and well, and as sane in mind as you'd wish him to be. We believe it, ma'am; we all but know it."

She let her head fall back in the chair. "You, I feel sure, would not tell me this unless you had good grounds for it, Mr. Duffham. Oh, if it may but be so! But—then—what of those cries that we heard?" she added, recollecting them. "I am sure they were his."

"Very likely. Stephen may have had him shut up in the tower, and Frank cried out to let the world know he was there. Oh, I daresay that was it. I should not wonder, Mrs. Frank, but your husband may be here to-day."

She rose from her seat, face lightening, hands trembling, eyes gazing. She had caught sight through the window of a small knot of people approaching the house door, and she recognized the cut of Frank's fair Saxon face amid them, and the trim of his golden hair. Duffham knew no more till she was in Frank's arms, sobbing and crying.

Ring! knock! shake! Shake! knock! ring! It was at the front door of the Torr, and old Jones was doing it. He had gone there to apprehend Stephen Radcliffe, a whole posse of us at his tail—where we had no business to be—and the handcuffs sticking out of his side-pocket.

By the afternoon of the day just told of, the parish was up in arms. Had Frank Radcliffe really risen from the dead, it could scarcely have caused more commotion. David Skate, for one, was frightened nearly out of his senses. Getting in from Alcester market, Sally accosted him, as he was crossing the yard, turning round from the pump to do it, where she was washing the summer cabbage for dinner.

"The master be in there, sir."

"What master?" asked David, halting on the way.

"Why the master hisself, Mr. Frank. He be come back again."

To hear that a dead man has "come back" again and is then in the house you are about to enter, would astonish most of us. David Skate stared at Sally, as if he thought she had been making free with the cider barrel. At that moment, Frank appeared at the door, greeting David with a smile of welcome. The sun shone on his face, making it look pale, and David verily and truly believed he saw Frank's ghost. With a shout and a cry, and cheeks all turned to a sickly tremor, he backed behind the pump and behind Sally. Sally, all on the broad grin, enjoyed it.

"Why, sir, it be the master hisself. There ain't nothing to be skeered at."

"David, don't you know me?" called out Frank heartily; and came forth with outstetched hands.

But David did not get his cheeks right again for a good quarter of an hour. And he was in a maze of wonder all day.

A warrant had been issued for the apprehension of Stephen Radcliffe of the Torr, and old Jones started off to the Torr to execute it. As if Stephen was likely to be found there! Ringing the bell, knocking at the door, shaking the handle, stood old Jones; the whole string of us behind burning to help him. It was not answered, and old Jones went at it again. You might have heard the noise over at Church Dykely.

Presently the door was drawn slowly back by Stephen Radcliffe's daughter—the curate's wife. She was trembling all over and looking fit to drop. Lizzy had come over from Birmingham and learned what had taken place. Naturally it scared her. She had always been the best of the bunch; and she had, of course, not known the true secret of the cries.

"I want to see Mr. Radcliffe, if you please, ma'am," began old Jones, putting his foot inside, so that the door should not be closed again.

"My father is not here," she answered, shaking and shivering.

"Not here!" repeated old Jones, surreptitiously stealing one hand round to feel the handcuffs.

"There's no one in the house but myself," she said. "When I got here, an hour or two ago, I found the place deserted."

"I should like to see that for myself, ma'am," returned incredulous old Jones.

"You can," she answered, drawing a little back. For she saw how futile it would be to attempt to keep him out.

Old Jones and some more went in to the search. Not a living creature was there but herself and the dog. Stephen Radcliffe had never been back since he started for Alcester in the morning.

In fact, Stephen was not to be found anywhere, near or distant. Mrs. Stephen was not to be found. Eunice Gibbon was not to be found. They had all made themselves scarce. The women had no doubt contrived to convey the news to Stephen while he was at Alcester, and he must have lost no time in turning his back on Warwickshire.

In a day or two, a rumour arose that Stephen Radcliffe and his wife had sailed for Canada. It proved to be true. "So much the better," said old Jones, regaling himself, just then, with cold beef in the Squire's kitchen. "Let him go! Good shut of bad rubbish!"

Just the sentiments that prevailed generally! Canada was the best place for Stephen the crafty. It spared us further sight of his surly face and saved the bother of a prosecution. He took only his own

three hundred a year with him; the Squire, for Frank, had resumed the receipt of the other three. And Lizzy, the daughter, with a heap of little ones at her skirts, remained in possession of the Torr until it should be taken. She had charge to let it as soon as might be.

Pitchley's farm resumed its bustle and its sounds of every-day, happy life. The crowds that flocked to it to shake hands with Frank and welcome his wonderful resuscitation were beyond telling. Frank had sworn a solemn oath never to drink again: he never would, God helping him. He *knew* that he never should, he whispered one day to Mr. Brandon, a great joyous light in his face as he spoke. His mother praying for him in dying, had told him that he would overcome; she had *seen* that he would in that last solemn hour, for the prayer had been heard, bringing her peace. He had overcome now, he said, and he would and should overcome to the end.

And Mr. Brandon, reading the faith and the earnestness, felt as sure of it as Frank did.

Frank kept his word. And, two years later, there he was, back at the Torr again. For Stephen had died of a severely cold winter in Canada, and his son Tom had died, but not of cold, and the Torr was Frank's.

Mrs. Stephen came back again, and took up her abode at her brother's. She would enjoy the three hundred a year for life, by Stephen's will; it would then go to her daughter Lizzy—who would want it badly enough with her flock of youngsters. Becca and Eunice turned their attention to poultry, and sent rare fowls to shows, and got prizes for them. Eunice returned long before Mrs. Stephen. She had never been out of England at all; and, finding it safe for her, put in an appearance, one winter day, at the gamekeeper's lodge.

Frank began to make alterations at the Torr as soon as he entered it, cutting down trees, and trying to render it a little less gloomy. Annet, with a calm face of sweet content, was much occupied at that time with a young man who was just getting on his legs, propelling him before her by the help of some safety reins that she called "backstrings," a fair child, who had the frank face and the golden curls of his father. And in all the country round about, there was not a gentleman more liked and respected than Francis Radcliffe of Sandstone Torr.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

# A DRIVE TO THE LAND'S END.

*By the Author of* "A Night in a Monastery."

MY old and very dear friend Z, one of the great men of Cornwall, had drawn from me—without much difficulty it must be confessed—a promise to spend a month with him in his delightful neighbourhood. There were lions in the western land: luxuriant vegetation; an unrivalled sea; a beautiful and rocky coast; the Scilly Islands; the peculiar traits of the Cornish race, who of themselves form a study.

At the beginning of June, before the weather set in too fiercely hot (it was hot enough in truth), I went down.

There were two ways of reaching Falmouth— by land and by water. Each had its attractions. Two or three days at sea, though nothing more than going "down channel," must be bracing to nerves jarred with work, heat, and the wear and tear of London life. This was strong argument in favour of the water, provided fair weather could be insured. But what of the contrary?

By land there were pastoral charms: the delight of getting rapidly over the ground; of reaching Falmouth in less than ten hours. There would also be the melancholy happiness of a glimpse at old and well loved spots unseen for many a long day; unseen, in fact, since those youthful days when the world seemed full of fair promises and brilliant hopes; days which each of us has but once in his lifetime; when work, care, thought, responsibility, exist not; when life is one stream of unbroken melody played to harmony wherein may be the sweetest modulations but no discord. A passing glance at some of these old sign-posts of "a day that was dead," would possess a peculiar pleasure, though mixed, as most pleasures are, with pain: awakening old memories, past friendships, buried hopes, dead loves.

To add to these inducements, in the midst of doubt and indecision, entered a friend. The day of my departure was, as chance would have it, the day of his also: on the very same line, by the very same train. He was giving himself two or three months' holiday. We might travel together as far as Bristol. The scale was turning.

On Monday night A—— crossed over from Ostend amidst torrents of rain; one of the heaviest seas running on record; the wind blowing great guns; driving the boat into Dover an hour before her time: a feat never before accomplished. This was bad news. The scale turned. In favour of land, and the Flying Dutchman, which starts daily from Paddington at 11.45.

On Wednesday morning, at 11.20, I reached the Great Western

station. My friend and compagnon de voyage, it must be explained, is a notorious stay-at-home. He has been known to pack up his trunks, pay his bills, leave his benediction upon his laundress, go off to the station, take his ticket, enter the train, and for no earthly reason get out again and return home. Change being good for everyone, this is a very insane proceeding. Well knowing both himself and his eccentricities, I was prepared for something of this sort, if, indeed, he turned up at all. Yes; there he was; patrolling the flags, just where the cabs crash up; in his eyes an ominously restless expression. "Just arrived," said he, on catching sight of me, jerking out his sentences excitedly. "Must go back again—forgotten a very important black bag—can't possibly go without it—just twenty minutes to do it in," consulting his watch, "not a moment to lose."

This was true enough. For it took rather more than that length of time to accomplish half the distance. A case clearly to be met only by a severe exercise of the will—just as doctors control some of their mad patients by a look of the eye.

"What about your baggage?" was the natural inquiry.

"It can go back with me, *in case* anything unforeseen—which I do not contemplate—should occur to detain me."

The cabman dismissed, my erratic friend was marched by the arm into the station. "Can such a plea hold good?" he was asked quietly. "Do you for a moment suppose that to-day you will be indulged in your peculiar idiosyncrasies?"

"But the black bag!" he retorted with energy. "That valuable black bag! *I will not* travel without that particular black bag."

"What does this offending black bag contain?"

"Things most important."

"Your will, for instance? or your best service of gold plate?"

"N—o—t exactly that. Articles of toilet ——"

"I see. Combs and brushes and shaving tackle. Things indispensable it is true, but easily replaced. Here's the telegraph office. Send off a message requesting them to be forwarded by the next train. If they don't turn up, buy others."

It ended in victory. The message was despatched. At 11.45 we began slowly to move away from the great Babel: my friend looking the picture of a man in the last extremity of affliction.

Five minutes later his hair began gradually to rise up with horror.

"What's the matter?" I asked anxiously.

"Left my cheque-book on the table. Must get out at the next station. This time I will *not* be thwarted."

Have you ever noticed that persons invariably put on more emphasis, fly into greater passions, make very much more noise, when they are conscious of weakness on their side? It is the natural protest of the mind: as an infant struggles in the hands of a giant.

"Horribly careless!" I muttered. "You deserve to be robbed right and left. By-the-by, what's that bulky-looking article sticking out of your pocket?"

Out came the cheque-book. A flush of shame, carnation-tinted, suffused my friend's countenance, clouding for a moment its bland and open expression.

"Man! man!" I cried, apostrophizing the roof of the carriage, shaking my head more wisely than a Solon: "thou art full of inventions! But," I added, coming back to earth and plain language, "this will enable you to proceed comfortably on your journey. No need to trouble the next station."

And with a sigh, with a groan and a glare of baffled revenge, my friend reinstated his cheque-book in its resting-place.

The morning was very glorious. The blue sky, flecked with high, white, ethereal-looking clouds, threw lights and shadows upon the landscape, appealing to the imagination, and making all things beautiful. Mile after mile was a succession of quiet, charming prospect: it was impossible to avoid coming to the conclusion: all, no doubt, have come to it often: that very little scenery of its kind in the world will outrival our own English hills and valleys: none can be more beautiful to dwell amidst; none will so perfectly yield a feeling of home and rest. For a season the grand, cloud, snow-capped Alps, the wild and rugged pictures of northern Europe, the roaring torrents and giant and luxuriant vegetation of America, may be, and are doubtless, heart-stirring and emotional, awakening in the mind the pleasures of astonishment and sublimity, and in some cases, inspiration. These are wonderful for a time; there is perhaps scarcely a feeling in the world equal to the emotions they arouse in the soul: but to live in and amongst, year after year, the Englishman comes back with a sigh of relief, to his own quiet vales and rivers, his own hills and hamlets, and feels that here indeed is Home.

Between Bath and Bristol the scenery was as varied and beautiful as perhaps anywhere on the road, with its nooks and corners shady with overhanging trees, with stretches of green pasture and glimpses of calm waters kissed by the melancholy willow. My friend: whose soul was occupied with conflicting emotions; refusing to be charmed by the beautiful, as he realized more and more how thoroughly he had been defeated and overthrown: seized upon this particular opportunity to close his eyes in sleep: sleep so profound that I had much trouble in arousing him at Bristol: where, with regret on both sides, and a slight feeling of suspicion on mine, we parted.

At four o'clock we reached Exeter. Two hundred and fifty miles in four hours and a quarter, including stoppages! Ten minutes' breathing time, and we were off again. How beautiful and singular was the journey in parts between Exeter and Plymouth! On one hand the

towering red sandstone cliffs, beneath whose shadows we hurried; so close that they could almost be touched. On the other hand, still, smooth water, bays and creeks, with green slopes beyond dotted with clusters of white houses reposing in the hot sunshine: every now and then a glimpse of the ocean, perfectly at rest, vessels lazily passing along with set sails flapping in the slight breeze, or riding at anchor upon the motionless surface. Upon any lover of scenery previously unacquainted with this part of the country, this portion of the journey will strike with wonder and admiration: it is a new world: a world which belongs to the Arabian Nights or the Tales of the Genii.

Plymouth and another halt at last. Here all was crowd and confusion. An agricultural show was afloat: the platform was packed with people bound for all parts of Devonshire and Cornwall. From neighbouring fields strains of music were wafted; fierce brass bands playing against each other; shows were proclaiming their attractions; the streets were decorated with barbers' poles grown to gianthood; from one to another of which festive garlands of artificial flowers swung gracefully: you might fancy the air impregnated with their perfume. Flags of all nations were flying; streamers flapped in the wind: Plymouth, in the largeness of its heart, and the excitement of the moment, was cosmopolitan. At nightfall a grand display of fireworks would close the scene.

Leaving the good people to enjoy this variety of attractions, we started again, passed over the wonderful Royal Albert Bridge, and in due time—when darkness had shut out all surrounding objects—reached Truro. After that—Falmouth.

A hearty welcome, a comfortable night's rest, effectually scattered next morning the slight fatigues of the previous day. What a scene was before me, as I looked forth that morning from the breakfast-room windows! The beautiful and grand Atlantic, converted here, by the land jutting out on either side, into a bay. The sun's rays were pouring down upon the surface, the ripples reflected the glitter in a myriad jewel-gleams and flashes. The colours of the water were more numerous and exquisite than any I had yet seen on English shores: varying from a deep green and long streaks of blue, to the brightest, purest, most transparent, translucent aqua marine.

To the left stood Pendennis Castle, on a high bold rock, proudly challenging the ocean. The rocks were covered with grass and furze, white paths twining in and out among them. At their foot the sea rippled lazily to and fro, breaking into small lines of foam. As we listened with open window it was possible to fancy we heard the quiet plash upon the shore—a sound so soothing to one fresh from the ceaseless roar of the great metropolis.

To the right, the land and the cliffs jutted far out, seeming at last to mingle with the sky, which in the early morning was of a pale opal

blue. Here and there a ship passed grandly on her way to a distant port, and now and again a small boat, or yacht, or steamer rounded Pendennis Point, and ploughed the quiet surface of the water. A scene of beauty from which it was difficult to turn away.

Falmouth consists chiefly of one long, narrow, straggling street; all up and down hill, all twists and turns. This one street was built in the old days: but of late years, Falmouth, like most other places, has increased in size and population; if the ancient street has not widened, others have sprung up in addition. Pleasant suburbs, where tall houses raise their heads over glorious stretches of sea and country, hill and valley.

The neighbouring seats, without being extensive, possess few rivals for beauty in all England. Take one of them. Nature has been very prodigal. Never were trees so wonderfully and beautifully grouped: the most perfect skill and taste could not have accomplished like results. Here you look from a height down into a valley; the undulations are varied and graceful; the trees on either side are waving in the breeze, their different heights mingling together in unbroken outline, the many shades of green delighting the eye. Towards the end of the slope you perceive a rustic bridge spanning a pond, adorned with reeds and splendid water lilies: and, at the very end, a wide, calm river flowing past majestically. Beyond all again, hills rising. The grounds are rich in tropical plants, growing freely in full air; as large and beautiful, as flourishing as you will find them at Kew or in their native soil. Conspicuous amongst them are the bamboo and the aloe; the former shooting upwards its stalks, so long and straight and strong, that a sudden desire to cut one and go a-fishing in that broad river below, involuntarily takes possession of the mind. The aloes are numberless. Here and there you see one in bloom; its rich scarlet flowers a sight almost worth the price of the poor plant's life. Further on, a plant that has flowered and is dying. These aloes put forth blossom but once; they are many years reaching maturity; then, in a few months, a long stalk shoots out, the flowers burst forth in glory, bloom, expand, reach perfection, and die: and the plant, seemingly exhausted by this prodigious effort, dies too. In the middle of that grass plot you see a rhododendron—one single plant—one hundred and eighty-five feet in circumference! Further on, a laurel, large as an oak or elm tree.

In treading through grass, or dead leaves, or brushwood, be careful not to disturb a snake; they are not numerous, but they exist, and are poisonous, though not always deadly. One day a gardener chopped one in half, just as it was jumping down its hole. The head disappeared, and the other half of the body distinctly severed, followed it; showing that the law of motion, or muscular action, or whatever may be the scientific term, can exist when life is extinct. The lanes abound in many varieties of ferns, especially to be noticed the osmunda, exceeding, when small, all other ferns in beauty of form.

The great commercial feature of Falmouth is its shipping, growing yearly in importance. It has a fine natural harbour, in which ships can easily take refuge; and where, going up the River Fal, I know not how many vessels it has been said can take refuge without one being able to see the masts of another. A friendly yacht one morning sailed us up the Fal, amidst scenery which has been brought into comparison with the Rhine, though the aspect and features of the two rivers are perfectly distinct one from the other. On either side, the banks were an unbroken mass of foliage; so thick that the trees and branches holding the foliage were completely hidden. This gave them a singular beauty and richness not to be matched. One side was lighted up by the sun; the leaves glistened and waved in the soft breeze, and threw lights and shadows over each other, as if playing at hide-and-seek. The opposite bank was in shadow, grand and sombre. The contrast was striking; on the one hand you were met by frowns, on the other by smiles: a type of clouds and sunshine; summer and winter; youth and age; a joyous heart and a heart bowed down.

One of the charms of the river is its perpetual windings. It is impossible to see far ahead; imagination is constantly on the alert, wondering what the next turn will disclose. And when turn after turn reveals nothing but this unbroken bank of rich foliage, you marvel and are astounded at Nature's wealth. At King Harry's Ferry, the trees have been chopped away to make room for a small white house or two, and you look up the banks into a long vista of cool, shady green. Still sailing, you presently catch sight of Lord Falmouth's place, an object from the river both picturesque and enchanting.

The river is full of creeks which wound round out of sight as we passed them, their banks still lined with the same thick foliage. Returning, we had a fine view of the entrance to Falmouth Harbour; on the one side Pendennis Castle crowning its heights, on the other the lighthouse low down at the foot of the cliffs; between, the river and the ocean meeting, and blending together.

We were to have started on Monday morning in an open carriage, for a week's driving tour in that part of the country which is terminated by the Land's End, returning in time for rest on Sunday. But on Monday we were delayed, and Tuesday proved wet: a steady rain, a dark unbroken curtain of clouds. Towards evening it cleared; the clouds dispersed, and the sun went down in a sea of gold. This was promising for Wednesday; which proved all that could be desired.

Few pleasures are more delightful than that of travelling through the air in a comfortable vehicle, where you can recline at ease and enjoy the surrounding fine scenery. The enjoyments of pedestrianism may be great where a superabundance of muscular strength and vigour is possessed, with the need of due exercise thereof; but to those less happily gifted, the delight of being drawn through scenes of beauty

without bodily exertion is sufficient and all satisfying. The strength untaxed, the mind is at liberty to give all its powers to the enjoyment of the hour; and the memory is more capable of retaining the impressions it receives. There is a pleasant sound in the very clatter of the horses' hoofs, as they trot briskly over the white roads.

And the roads in Cornwall are excellent. Hard as iron; smooth and level as pavement: a matter contributing in no small degree to the happiness and comfort of the traveller.

We started with what sailors would call a fair wind—which to us meant a fair sky. Through the town, past the church, in its nook so like in shape to that delight of a healthy schoolboy, a three-cornered puff; out into the open country. For some distance the scenery was not striking, but at length, we turned into Trelowarran, one of the most lovely places imaginable. An ancient patriarch opened the gates for us, bowed reverently to Z., and we entered a long avenue, where the trees met overhead; sloping upwards to the right; shutting out the hot, glaring sun, the leaves only admitting here and there a momentary beam, to relieve the cool refreshing gloom of the long vista. Below us, to the left, was a steep precipice, at the bottom trees and shrubs of every description. We were travelling on a level with the tops of these trees, which called forth a new and curious sensation. Far down was a large pond of water, half hidden by the intervening verdure. Here, finding the spot so retired and charming, the coachman drew up, and we brought out our picnic basket, which happily had been well stocked under the superintendence of the housekeeper. A wise precaution when travelling in this part of the country, where you may occasionally have to put up at an inn whose larder will be not only scantily but badly furnished.

Quitting Trelowarran, we entered upon the broad open heath or downs, through which the road lay for the most part right up to the Lizard. Being warm, pleasant weather, the breeze was grateful, but on a cold winter's day or night it sweeps across the unsheltered moor, either towards the sea or from it, with a cruel, cutting force which seems to come straight from the North Pole. Not a tree visible for miles; not a house; not a sign of smallest shelter. Cattle were grazing in scattered groups, and it was a matter for wonder how their owners could find and collect them together again at will. There was much furze about; wild flowers also; and heath with that beautiful yellow blossom which turns scarlet in fading. But the rare Cornish heath—the most beautiful of all—found only in the neighbourhood of the Lizard, and on the coast of Portugal, was not yet in bloom. In the distance stood the tower of a ruined church, venerable with age, which alone broke the monotony of the surrounding barrenness.

Suddenly, in the midst of this wide, wild expanse, uprose a dark bank of clouds. Almost before we could see it, it was upon us. The

wind increased in force and went whistling over the moor; the air turned cold and bleak as winter. The coachman hastily closed the carriage, when down came the rain like a waterspout. It lasted about five minutes; then the clouds rolled onwards, and left the sky blue and bright. It was summer again. Approaching the Lizard town, in the distance we saw large white marks which we took for tombstones, but which as we approached proved to be nothing more romantic than linen put down to dry. This at any rate was some sign of civilization, and ere long we reached the Lizard town itself: a handful of straggling houses and a few booths erected for the working and sale of the serpentine marble.

"At the Lizard remember to go to Hill's Hotel." Such had been the counsel of a dozen different friends. We, therefore, concluded that Hill's hotel must be as desirable as it was celebrated. (I think it is Mr. G. H. Lewes who has remarked that the merit of a thing must be measured by its success). This, as far as Hill's hotel was concerned, was somewhat of a mistake: though, perhaps, in this out-of-the-world spot it was all that could reasonably have been looked for. Still we managed to get accommodation, and that was something. A small sitting-room on the ground floor, and two still smaller bedrooms above. The better of the two bedrooms fell to the lot of Z. The other was very nearly, but not quite dark. After our tour of inspection we returned to the sitting-room. Its windows looked on to a small garden about six feet long, in a terrible state of delapidation. The few houses beyond seemed poor and miserable. Here, at any rate, we were not surrounded by the beauties of Nature. Contrasts, perhaps, are desirable. Should we enjoy the sunshine of life so much if it were not for its shadows?

Z. threw himself on the sofa for the purpose of stealing a nap. I therefore left him to half an hour's solitude and repose, and wandered through the lanes to the lighthouse, beneath which, on the very edge of the cliff, away from all the world and from all signs of life, light-house excepted, an artist has built himself a habitation. Nothing can be more delightfully situated. Stretching far around is the magnificent ocean, which this evening was calm and cold looking; but oftentimes is loud and boisterous, and dashes up against the rocks with all the force of the Atlantic, as if it would sweep away these wonderful walls and bulwarks of the world. But the rocks stand fast, and the waves fall back lashing themselves into greater fury. This artist has the sea for ever to look upon, in all its moods and changes; and on shore, on either hand, mile after mile of the fine rocky coast.

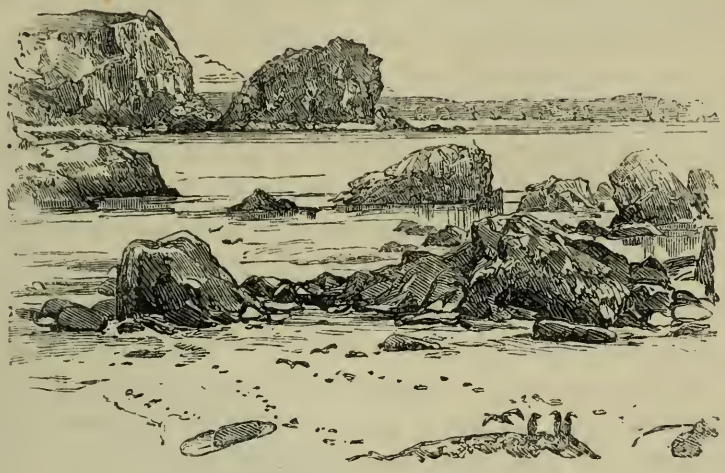
Whilst gazing upon this scene, rain began to fall again, and I strolled back to the inn.

"Have you managed to get a nap?" I asked of Z., who was still in possession of the sofa.

"Yes," he answered. "But not without interruptions."

"Of what kind?"

"The first was in the form of a man, who put his head in at the door to inform me his name was John Williams. If I required a guide he was very much at my service."



Lion Rock, Lizard Point.

"And the second?"

"Was in the form of a damsel, who also put her head in at the door, and wished to know if we were likely to want tea—a want by no means uncommon. If so—forgive the expression, but it is hers, not mine—what would we please to order in the shape of *vittles!*"

Kynance Cove.

"Are they indeed so splendidly primitive, here?" I cried, with a burst of laughter. "But the third interruption?"

"Was yourself." (Oh for a pencil to outline Z.'s dry expression!)

I was about to retort when the door opened and the above mentioned damsel entered with the "tea-equipage." *

Rain was falling steadily, so that we could not go out again. Has

* Borrowed from Bulwer, who borrowed it from somebody else.

the reader experienced at a roadside inn, the weary hours of a wet evening?—how at length bed-time, with the refuge of one's own sanctum, does not seem altogether a thing undesirable? But with me, at least, retirement was neither rest nor sleep. The window of the room, with two panes taken out for ventilation, looked on to a passage; which passage had no communication with this part of the house. Anyone passing might at pleasure stop and examine the premises, or thrust in an arm and request the honour of a hand-shake. Opposite the window, three feet of passage between, was another window open to the sky. This was mercifully kept down all night or before morning I must have been suffocated. The missing panes, however, not only admitted the fresh air, but all the sounds of the house, which up to long past midnight were varied and numerous. Conspicuous amongst these was the incessant and irritating cry of a child in an adjoining chamber: a little toad of a girl who resented all the efforts of her pacifying mother by flying into torrents of rage. Interludes of what sounded like a pitched battle of kicking and slapping agreeably broke the monotony of the shrill screaming. At last, when the house had sunk into repose, sounds as of ghosts declared themselves behind the wainscoting. Anyone could imagine such a place haunted. But it was only rats frisking and gambolling about, and holding revels in their own peculiarly interesting fashion. They seemed to be in every part of the wall, and I was afraid I should soon not only hear but see them. Nature, however, has her revenges; and just as a distant voice was calling to the cows to come and be milked; in that peculiarly cheerful jargon so intelligible to the useful animals; I fell asleep.

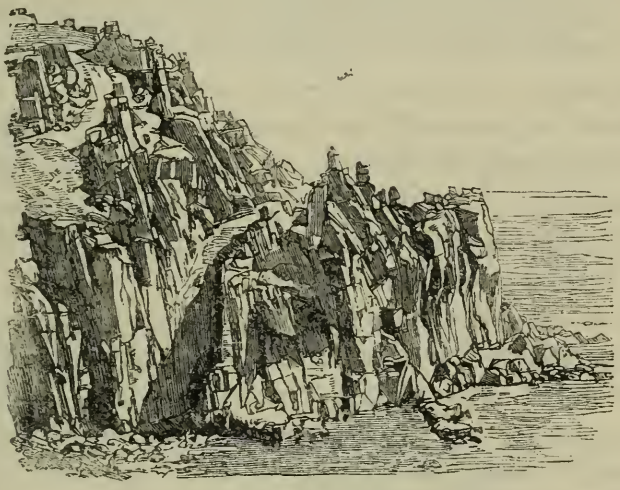
A few hours later we met at the breakfast table. The weather was fine; the air balmy; the sky serene and blue. By ten o'clock we started for the Lizard Point, under the guidance of John Williams: I walking with the guide; Z. preferring the carriage, as far as the road would admit of a passage for it.

About twenty minutes' walk; now through lanes bordered on each side by low walls built of great loose stones, between the crevices of which the heath and stone-crop crept; now over fields; brought us to the edge of the cliffs. As it had been last night, so this morning the feeling was one of disappointment. Was the rocky coast of Cornwall not grander than this? of greater boldness and magnificence? something of which the English might be justly proud,—as the Swiss are proud of their mountains? Praise oft iterated had caused imagination to colour and heighten reality beyond itself. Here, at any rate, was nothing to hush the breath and quicken the pulses. But here were not the finest parts of the coast—not even as yet was it the Lizard Point.

Nevertheless, a conbination of rocks, a wide expanse of sea, and a bright sky, can never be otherwise than beautiful; and the walk to the

Lizard Point along the brow of the cliffs was delightful and exhilarating: a succession of scrambling up and down the hills and undulations: whilst the fresh pure air from the sea blew with a feeling of life and health. Here and there a rent in the rocks exposed their rough, jagged edges running in steep precipices down to the sand. At one point the guide turned, and indicating a distant rock, asked if I could detect in it a likeness to anyone. It was the most perfect fac-simile of Lord Brougham.

At the Lizard Point, the guide left me to find my way alone down the cliffs, whilst he went off in search of Z. The descent was steep and once or twice I narrowly escaped reaching the bottom more quickly than pleasantly. But, once on the flat sand, it was impossible to avoid confessing that the scene was beautiful, and, in a measure, grand. Looking down upon the rocks from a height, and looking up



ROCK NEAR TOL PEDN PENWITH.

at them from the depths, gave very distinct and separate impressions. The form of the rocks was varied and eccentric; in some places great boulders had proclaimed their independence by detaching themselves from the main land, and jutting out into the sea. This added much to the effect of the whole. The colour of the water in shore was an exquisite pale green, of that peculiar transparency which is so marked a feature on this coast; except in spots where a large bunch of sea-weed, otherwise invisible, turned the surface into a ring of deep, dark, liquid purple. Seagulls were flying about and screaming, with their peculiar, plaintive cry, as if they feared an enemy was about to invade their lonely habitation. Now and then a cormorant detached itself from the flock, and flew screaming over the water, cutting the air with his long, black neck.

At length the guide reappeared, piloting Z. down the rough cutting, too steep and narrow to admit a carriage. Then we visited the rocks and caves; all of which have distinguishing names, such as Kitchen,

Parlour, Drawing-room, &c. Some of them are less innocently christened; conspicuous amongst these, "The Devil's Throat," "The Devil's Bellows," "The Devil's Frying-pan:" names rather calculated to make the hair stand on end, to intimidate the nervous, and cause them to fly precipitately from a spot so unhallowed. "The Devil's Bellows" is a hole in the rock, through which the wind rushes upwards in an immense shower of spray: and verily the force is terrific. The "Post-Office" is a long slit, upon which if a pocket handkerchief or sheet of paper be placed it will presently be sucked in out of sight, to re-appear after a pause with a tremendous rush and whirl, that sends it high into the air. In a rocky nook, the guide pointed out a cormorant upon its nest. It appeared a very small bird at such a height, and was looking down upon us, stretching its long neck with a gesture half humorous and comical. It is always there: a sentinel guarding the fortress.

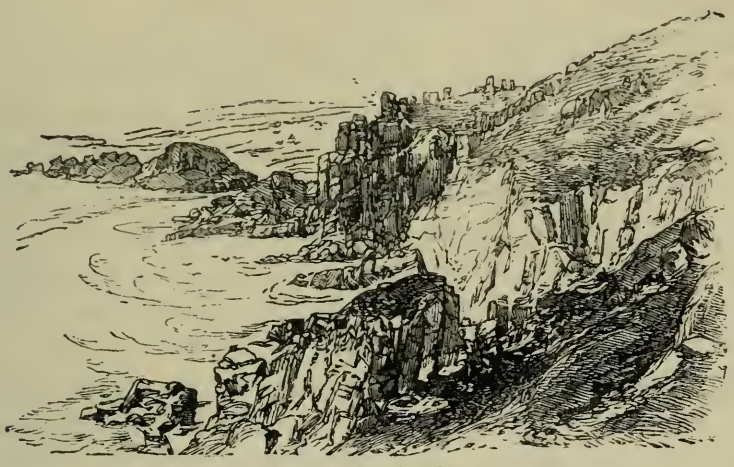
After making the round of the rocks, we turned for a few moments' rest into the small cottage at the foot of the cutting, where the neat old woman who keeps it announces herself to the world on a signboard as "Mrs. Roberts's accommodation rooms for visitors," and, in the season, drives a thriving trade in photographs and gingerbeer. Then climbing the steep ascent, we dismissed the guide, took our seats thankfully in the carriage, and pursued our way towards Penzance. This was to be our second day's destination.

For some distance the road led through the cheerless downs we had traversed yesterday; but after awhile we branched off and entered picturesque lanes, with hedges on either side, fresh, green, and ferny. Occasionally we passed through a village, where the cottagers rushed to their doors to take a look at the carriage and drop a curtsey to Z., illustrious and imposing in appearance as he is learned and great in mind. All looked poor and destitute, but for the most part clean and neat.

After a considerable drive we reached Marazion, and here caught a first view of St. Michael's Mount. Its picturesque aspect on approaching is very remarkable. A great rock rising out of the sea, covered with grass and furze: tapering gradually up from the base, much in the form of a sugar loaf: the summit crowned by the abbey, an ancient building of the exact nature suited to the mount. From Marazion it is possible to walk across to the Mount at low water, a distance of some four hundred yards: though the road is stony and slippery. So that St. Michael's Mount is an island only when the tide is rising.

Leaving this for another day we drove on towards Penzance, the sea to our right hand; to our left a fertile, almost luxuriant valley, bounded by hills. At the entrance to Penzance the houses were old and wretched looking: a part of the town dating as far back as the days of the Phœnicians: when King Solomon sent ships over to Cornwall for

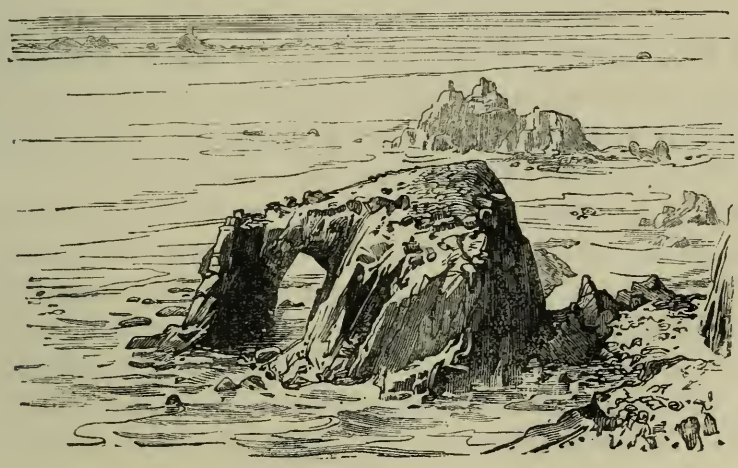
the tin that enriched his country. But the modern part of the town proved of size and importance. The esplanade was very long and broad. Yet, on the whole, there was something about the place it was impossible to like: a stiff, inhospitable aspect, which made one feel



THE LAND'S END.

desolate and cheerless. The Queen's hotel was large, tolerably comfortable, and sufficiently moderate in most of its charges.

It chanced to be fair time. In a field near the hotel the booths had taken up their station. For a few moments after tea curiosity took us amongst them, and we wandered about the crowd. Shoals of people



ENYS DODNAN ROCK, SHOWING ARCHWAY. THE LONGSHIPS LIGHTHOUSE IN THE DISTANCE.

were streaming in, attracted by the lions and tigers; by dancing women, all bugles and spangles, and garments short enough to scandalize a Lord Chamberlain; by flags representing dreadful murders and appalling ghosts; by a flourish of trumpets and beating of drums; by steam-engines whistling and shrieking, and men shouting with the voices of stentors: a mixture of sounds which filled the air as with an invisible chorus of demons. At the gates some mischievous wight had thickly tarred the walls, and many unhappy pleasure-seekers were

holding grave debate as to whether they would eventually have to carry away with them portions of the wall, or leave behind them remnants of their clothes. The next morning we started about ten o'clock for the Land's End. Of all the drives this, on the whole was the prettiest and the pleasantest. We turned out of Penzance to the right, into narrow lanes of great beauty. The hedges grew high above our heads. Tall trees overshadowed us. The ferns and wild flowers—the showy foxglove conspicuous—grew in profusion. When quite clear of the town we ascended a hill, a steep valley to our right: and here again we were driving on a level with the tops of the trees. In the hollow was a sprinkling of cottages, covered with flowers and creepers: roses and fuchsias spreading from base to thatch: a sight more beautiful than the grandeur of a palace. From the windows splendid geraniums of the most brilliant scarlet looked forth upon the world.

Our first halt was at the Logan inn, where those who wish to visit the famous Logan rock have to alight. This is one of the finest spots on the coast. The cliffs are high, precipitous, and bold. Climbing up to the rocking stone was a work of difficulty, and some hazard. Z., who wisely contented himself with looking on from a distance, said that in our progress we appeared like flies scaling a wall. The cliffs were overrun with rabbits: "stony rocks for the conies:" who scuttered into their holes as soon as they caught sight of us. The gulls flew screaming above, whirling round and round, and darkening the air with their numbers. The sea played against the foot of the cliffs, dashing high up in foam and spray. The guide spoke in terms of such high praise of the rocky scenery between the Logan and the Land's End, that I decided to walk the distance, whilst Z. drove round in the carriage and awaited our arrival

After seeing Z. comfortably off, a short walk brought us to the rock called Tol Pedn Penwith. This is certainly the finest bit of rock scenery on the coast. From this point the walk to the Land's End should not be omitted; though it is a walk of some labour. But here, if anywhere on the South Cornish Coast, the rocks are grand.

At Tol Pedn Penwith we looked far down the cliffs, which in places were almost perpendicular, and, the guide asserted, six hundred feet deep. Standing on the highest point I looked around and far out, upon a glorious extent of sea. The water was unbroken by waves, but the never absent swell of the Atlantic came running in, roll upon roll, breaking against the rocks with increasing force as the tide rose. Here the colour was pale green; there, under a shadow, turning almost ink-black; further out, a deep, splendid blue. The light clouds flecking the sky threw their lights and shades upon the surface; and the passage of the wind, as it blew across, could be distinctly traced by the ripples it created. Here, as everywhere on this coast, gulls were flying about with strange cry and clamour; and the cormorants mixed with and

made friendly with them. Far out on the horizon the guide pointed to some black lines, which he said were the Scilly Islands. "You might come here a hundred times, sir," cried he, "and never see them. I have never seen them myself as distinctly as to-day."

The walk proved longer than had been anticipated. But for the guide I could never have found my way to the Land's End without difficulty and delay. It was a succession of going up and down hill; now darting inland for some litttle distance; now clearing a wall mysteriously hidden in brush and furze; now descending almost to the. water's edge; now rising to the top of the cliff; a most capricious roadway, but the most delightful imaginable. Instead of one hour, it was nearer three before we reached the inn, where Z. awaited me in pale terror, fancying that all kinds of dreadful possibilities must have happened.

I was not a little done up; but some excellent ham and eggs, and a bottle of really good champagne, did much to restore exhausted nature. Then I threw myself on the sofa, and for awhile contemplated the wonderful sea before me, bathed in a flood of golden sunshine, which broke into jewels, as the water played round the rocks jutting out for some distance. This was the Land's End, though no more the end of the land, as far as was to be seen, than any other part of the coast. A spot more retired could scarcely be conceived. To anyone requiring perfect rest, a week spent here would be invaluable: especially in the warm spring time, before tourists have begun to appear and disturb unpleasantly the solitude.

The drive back was if possible more beautiful than it had been in the morning. The lanes and hedges were cooler and in greater repose: here and there a bank appearing lined with ferns to the height of ten or twelve feet. In due time we reached Penzance, and drove through it on to Marazion.

In passing through Marazion the previous day we both fancied to have caught sight of a comfortable looking inn. But either this was a delusion, or the inn had been swallowed up by an earthquake; for to-day nothing of the sort appeared. All we could see was a neglected looking building called "Thomas's Hotel," which, upon inquiry, we found to be the best the place afforded.

Deploring our error we drove up to the inn door, and were. agreeably surprised at the result. It was one of those old fashioned inns where comfort is not sacrificed to show. A coat of paint on the outside would have set everything right; perhaps, ere now it has been given. The sitting-room on the first floor was clean, and from the windows the view of St. Michael's Mount was exceedingly pleasant. Above, we were given two good bed-rooms, from whose windows the view was still more charming.

A substantial tea was soon served up in a homely but most com-

fortable style; the strawberries and cream abundant. Man could desire nothing better.

The next morning, as Z. felt more inclined for repose than sight-seeing, I chartered a boat to St. Michael's Mount, and took the coachman with me.

In the old days this was a famous place for pilgrimages; and the town of Marazion was supported by the pilgrims who came to worship at the Mount. It has now lost its prosperity, to which Penzance, when it sprang into existence, gave the fatal blow. The look of deadness and decay about it is painful to see. In the reign of Henry the Eighth it was pillaged by the French: in that of Edward the Sixth by the Cornish rebels; the priory was suppressed, and never regained its footing.

St. Michael's Mount.

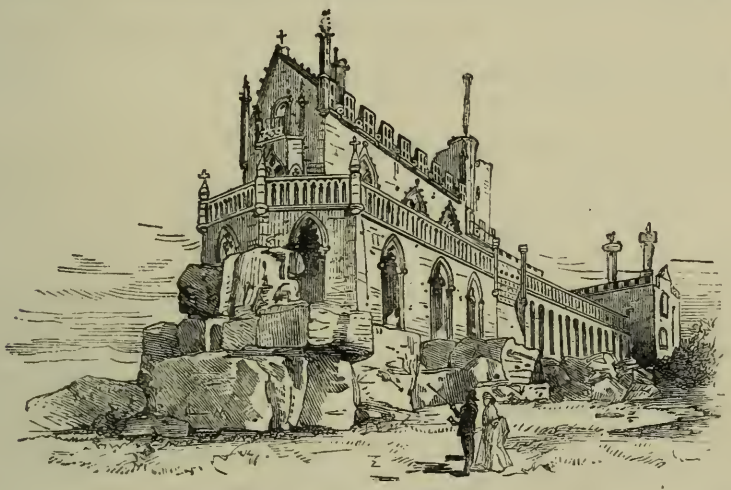
St. Michael's Mount, in situation, is beautiful and romantic, rising out of the sea, as it does, a mass of rock, from one point of view very perfect in shape, softened by verdure. At the base of the rock is a cluster of between thirty and forty houses, inhabited by fishermen: and a small harbour which will shelter vessels, it is said, of five hundred tons. At the top of the landing steps the first thing to arrest attention is a brass tablet shaped liked a foot, let in to the stone, to mark the spot upon which Her Majesty first stepped when she visited the Mount with the Prince Consort, in 1846.

In the remote ages of antiquity the Mount was believed to have been situated in a wood. Some suppose it to have been the island called Ixtis by Diodorus Siculus; whither the tin, when refined and cast into cubic ingots, was carried by the Britons, in carts, at low water, over the isthmus. It is not known when it was first consecrated to religious purposes. A priory of Benedictine Monks, afterwards

changed to Gilbertines, was founded here before 1044, when Edward the Confessor gave the Mount, with all its buildings and appendages, to that Community. In 1070 indulgences were granted by Pope Gregory the Seventh to all persons visiting the church with alms and oblations: and then for the first time it became the resort of pilgrims.

In 1471, after the battle of Barnet, John, Earl of Oxford, assembled a party of soldiers and crossed over from Wales to the Cornish coast. Under the disguise of pilgrims they gained admission to the castle, and overpowered the scanty garrison. Sir John Arundel was sent against the earl, but was repulsed and slain. The siege continued from September till February, when they surrendered on condition that their lives should be spared. In 1498 Perkin Warbeck landed at Whitsand Bay, and having been admitted into the castle by the monks, he put it into a state of defence.

The Priory of St. Michael being attached to the Abbey of Mont



St. Michael's Abbey.

St. Michel in Normandy, it was seized by Henry the Fifth as an alien priory, during the war with France. It was first given to King's College, Cambridge, and afterwards to the Nunnery of Sion, in Middlesex. After the Restoration it became the property of the St. Aubyns; since when it has not changed hands. The harbour was rebuilt in 1727, and is said to be capable of holding forty vessels.

The Mount is undoubtedly a more picturesque object from a distance than when close upon it: but the west rocks, which cannot be seen from the shore, are very fine. The body of the hill is of granite; its northern base of slate. The entire rock has excited much geological controversy.

Walking round the foot of the Mount—I think it is nearly a mile in circumference—we then climbed the steep ascent to the castle. We soon reached a platform armed with two batteries of guns, and above that a smaller platform with a battery of brass guns. The Abbey itself is not especially interesting: the principal rooms being the hall

and the chapel. The former was, in the old days, the refectory of the monks. In the latter Divine Service is held every Sunday; and when the tide serves many a small boat may be seen rowing across with its freight of worshippers.

The morning unfortunately was cloudy, and later on we drove into Helston in a deluge of rain. A quiet town: a stream of running water rippling through its streets, in colour red: proving that in its hidden course through the earth, it has come into contact with the old red sandstone. It was market-day. The place was crowded with buyers and sellers; with stalls and carts of every shape and description. Here we halted two hours for the sake of the horses. But in the excitement and bustle of a market-day the time passed pleasantly and quickly. Long before those two hours were over the weather had unexpectedly cleared, and the sun shot forth its enlivening beams. Thus favoured, we set out on our last stage, reaching Falmouth and home about six in the evening. So ended one of the most charming and delightful excursions to be made in the south or west of England. C. W. W.

## THREE YEARS OLD.

A DAINTY rose-bud peeping
From out its guardian sheath;
A tiny streamlet creeping
Across some rugged heath;
The rosy flush, faint dawning
Over the eastern sky,
Telling of rising morning,
And making night-shades fly:—
Which is the fittest type of thee,
My winsome little maid of three?

A story just beginning;
The first scene of a play;
A game while yet the winning
Is far and far away.
A feathery cloudlet, winging
Its silvery course to rain;
A new thought shapeless springing
Up from the teeming brain:—
All things of promise image thee,
My smiling little girl of three.

Not sweeter are the spring flow'rs
That rise from out the snow;
Not fresher April's sun-show'rs
That gladden all below;
Not softer or more blameless
The gently cooing dove;
Not fairer or more stainless
The clear blue vault above:
Less precious richest mine of gold
Then thee, dear child of three years old.

An earnest spirit purely
Looks from those liquid eyes—
A spirit kindred surely
With souls beyond the skies;
Thy soft round cheeks are glowing
With feeling unexpressed;
Thy free young thoughts are flowing
Towards regions not yet guessed:
All earth is fairy-land to thee,
My trusting, wond'ring babe of three.

And must the bright dreams vanish
The fantoms fade away?
Will times so sternly banish
All that is fresh and gay?
Ah! life is changing ever
As on and on it flows;
The thought becomes endeavour;
The bud a perfect rose.

But still the bud is sweetest;
We love the rising thought;
Though calm to age is meetest,
We count it dearly bought
At price of childhood's mirthfulness;
As, at price of childhood's bloom,
Wisdom, and wisdom's mournfulness
In the shadow of the tomb.

Ah! couldst thou ever, ever be
A happy child of only three!

EMMA RHODES.

# ONLY AN EPISODE.

IT was one of those delightful parties which Mrs. Lane had the happy faculty of getting up, where the music, and the supper, and the decorations were always perfect, and one was sure of meeting just the people one cared most to see. Not a "grand crush" of simply fashionable nonentities in their French toilettes, or a levee of newly-made millionaires—Mrs. Lane had a horror of empty-headed spendthrifts, and turned her back on them and their diamonds, on their airs and graces, in ladylike disdain. A very attractive and cultivated woman herself, this "Lady of the Manor" always drew the best people about her. It chanced that in the company to-night there was a first-class author, a renowned traveller or two, and a famous painter, "solid" men and brilliant women, gay belles and gallant cavaliers; while here and there might be seen a glittering uniform; for it had been a grand day of some kind for the field-officers.

And as the hours wore on, the tide of music and conversation and pleasant laughter flowed from the corners of the rooms, where little groups of congenial friends discussed matters amid themselves. The hall was a blaze of light and flowers; and here some of them promenaded: but the far-off, sombre library was shunned.

One couple only sat there. An Irishman, Captain Adair, and a young lady to whom he was betrothed, Louisa Haynes. One glance would tell you what Captain Adair was. Thirty, good-looking, brave and rich—what more could any woman ask, unless it were love; and *that* Dennis Adair gave as he gave everything else, freely, generously. As he would have given his life, had the need arisen, for this woman who held his heart in her keeping—this woman, who had said that she loved him; whose warm breath on his cheek fevered his blood and thrilled his pulses like wine.

The lights were dim; but in the grate a fire burned with a cheery glow. From the open door floated the hum of the gay voices, the ripples of light laughter, even fragments of the conversation. There was a hush presently: some one was beginning to sing.

"That is Maclennan's voice!" exclaimed Captain Adair.

A good voice, just touched with a soft Celtic accent. The words were the words of that sweet song; one of the sweetest ever sung, "The Irish Emigrant's Lament." Did its tender pathos touch any long past experience in his own life, that the singer's voice trembled so over the lines? They did not know. And what was it that made Dennis Adair's face change as he listened?

> "I'm sitting on the stile, Mary, where we we sat side by side,
> On a bright May morning long ago, when first you were my bride.
> The corn was springing fresh and green, the lark sang loud and high,
> And the red was on your cheek, Mary, and the lovelight in your eye."

Hearing it, the coils of lustrous blonde hair, thick-sown with pearls, and the perfect face drawn rather near to the soldier's breast, passed out of his mind as if they had never been. He stood on the green shores of his native land, with the blue skies of spring above his head; and beside him nestled a fair young girl, with dewy blossoms in her hair: and in the tender eyes a look that no other woman's had ever worn for him.

Ah, me! Ten long years lay between that time and the present; but it all came back to him as Maclennan sang—the young, wistful face, the clasp of the gentle hand, the glowing hopes of his sweet spring-time, the lark's song above their heads, and all the glory and brightness of a day that had long since passed away.

"'Tis but a step down yonder lane, the little church stands near,
The church where we were wed, Mary,—I see the spire from here;
But the graveyard lies between, Mary, and my step might break your rest,
Where I've laid you, darling, down to sleep, with your baby on your breast."

Home, and wife, and little child. Strange memories these for the courted man, the gallant cavalier, whom women delighted to honour. But I think that in the lives of most of us there are some passages which the world never reads, some pages for ever sealed even from the eyes that love us best. Louisa Haynes never guessed, even while her lover's arm was about her, how his thoughts had gone over leagues and leagues of blue water, to a green grave in old Ireland, guarded by a simple cross, emblem of the sleeper's faith.

"I'm bidding you a long farewell, my Mary, kind and true,
But I'll not forget you, darling, in the land I'm going to.
They say there's bread, and work for all, and the sun shines always there,
But I'll not forget old Ireland, were it fifty times as fair."

Bread and work he had found in the far-off lands he had gone out to; fame and riches, too; bnt he had *not* forgotten old Ireland, nor the love, faithful and unselfish, that had blessed his early manhood. Years might come, and a fairer head lie on his breast where hers had lain, but no other could ever be to him just what she had been—not even Louisa, tenderly beloved though she was; for that early happiness had come to him in the brightness and freshness of youth, and *that*—ah, no! never comes again to any one of us. And when the song was ended and its echoes had died away, Dennis Adair woke up with a start, and saw his promised wife beside him.

Captain Adair rose, gave her his arm and took her back to the more frequented rooms. Among all the revellers none played their part better than the man who had just been face to face with his dead past: for the peaceful unities of outward life must be preserved, and it is not well, I think, for any of us to carry our hearts in our faces.

# A DREAM FROM HEAVEN,

By the Author of "East Lynne."

## I.

### EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF ADAM GRAINGER.

*April the 20th.*—Another day gone, and no relief! How is this to end? My brain becomes bewildered with excess of thought, and a strange whirling of it sometimes comes on which turns my thoughts involuntarily towards madness. *A whirling of the brain!* Gabblers, who feel not what they say; poets, in their whispered measures; lovers, in their doubts and fears, prate of this: it is a common expression: the brain whirls, they say. But how little do they experience that of which they speak! the few who have indeed gone through this agony of the brain tell it not. When the paroxysm has left me, my frame trembles, my hands burn, and my heart is sick.

Insanity is deemed a thing to shudder at, and I have shuddered with the rest. I remember a party of us were once dining together; little more than boys we were; joyous fellows, rioting in the full sense of youth and life; and the conversation turned upon misfortune—an odd theme for *us*. Each gave his opinion as to what was the most distressing fate that could overtake man. I said madness. *But there are moments, now, when I envy those who are shut up in that secured building, the dome of which towers aloft in this great metropolitan city.* Bedlam! Bedlam! were I an inmate of your walls——. After a weary day of toil, how sweet is the homely bed on which the labourer sinks down to rest! and so a vision comes over me of sinking into insanity. I dare not say a longing vision: but as the one gives rest to the body, so the other would bring rest to the spirit—my troubled spirit!

*Friday.*—I have been reading again the public advertisements. A gentleman is wanted to superintend an office. Qualifications requisite: liberal education, gentlemanly appearance and manners, age about thirty-five, a good general knowledge of business, and to give security. Should I be able to obtain the latter? Why speculate on it? My application to the advertisers will but share the old fate, and elicit no reply.

I have deserved my lot: people tell me so, and they speak but the truth. What did I want with speculation? Was not my honourable appointment sufficient for me? I am not the first who has thrown away the substance to grasp the shadow. I richly merited the ruin that overtook me: but unfortunately into the same ruin I dragged my wife and children.

When I look back on the last few years I ask myself how we have lived, and I cannot answer. Things have only gone on from bad to worse. Our once happy home—not a vestige of it remains. Struggles, debts, duns, avoidance of creditors; these have been ours. One day spent in scheming how to obtain a dinner for the following, and in harassing uncertainties as to where we should the approaching week lay our heads. A few pounds from one source, a few from another; half a dozen shillings, begged or borrowed, serving for the supplies of one day, none the next; comforts not even glanced at, luxuries remembered as things that exist not for us, bare necessaries scantily supplied, and not always! And thus have we gone on for weeks, and months, and years.

*Saturday.*—Another week ended. Surely the approaching one must bring something to pass. And yet—how many weeks have gone before it, and have brought nothing! How harshly do those who have not known adversity judge of the world! they imagine that dishonour, if not crime, must necessarily attend fallen fortunes. So-and-so is "sold up," cried someone in my hearing at a house where I was the other day. "And he's over head-and-ears in debt besides. I look upon a fellow, sir, who runs headlong into debt, as little better than a swindler and a robber." Harsh epithets for one man to bestow upon another!

I dread to-night. For *I* am in debt; petty debt to petty tradespeople around the neighbourhood; and they will come at this, the end of the week, knocking at the door. But not voluntary debt; no, no; never think it. I was bred with the nicest sense of honour; taught to avoid debt as a crime: I would endure the sharp pangs of famine, even unto death—I *have* tasted of them—rather than sustain life by obtaining food for which I could not pay; but I dare not let those starve who depend on me for support. How eagerly I have struggled, and do struggle, to obtain employment, none can know; no matter what; anything that would but bring in the money for a bit of bread; and succeed I cannot.

*Sunday Morning.*—Thank God for Sunday! When I awake in the morning, and the remembrance that it is the Sabbath comes rushing over me, the thought speaks blessings to my soul. *A day of rest and peace.* How many, without this intervening cessation of their fiery antagonism with the world, would lay down their heads hopelessly and die! To-day everything is lovely; everything in the outward, visible world. The trees are clothed in the fresh green of early spring, the hedges are budding forth, and the sweet flowers are opening to the warm rays of the genial sun. Quiet reigns around; sounds of everyday life are not, and the very air is at rest; a rest that soothes the mind and almost speaks of hope.

Now the bells have begun for morning service. They are ringing

to-day. I wonder why. A more pleasing sound than the ding-dong of ordinary Sundays. Why can't they always ring? I remember now—one of the highest of our High Church dignitaries comes down to preach to-day in this suburb: that must be why they ring.

How long is it since I have been to church! Let none condemn me, until they are placed in my circumstances, and as sorely tried as I have been. There was no missing church before adversity came. I cannot afford a pew, and our clothes are not what they used to be. Margaret goes sometimes: she cannot forget that she is the daughter of a high churchman. If Dr. Channing could rise from his grave and witness the straits to which my imprudence has reduced her! A vision, an imaginary vista of the future, now and then steals over me on these calm, holy days—of these dark years being replaced by bright ones; of the children growing up around us, anxiously trained in all the observances of religion; when we shall sit, drawn together in peace and happiness, under our own vine and our own fig-tree, all the happier, the holier, for past adversity. But these hopeful dreams are broken off, as now, by the rushing thought that it is only a dream and never to be realised.

Never, never: the darkness has endured too long. I have humbly prostrated myself in agony, imploring of the Most High, in my bitter grief and repentance, that for my wife and children's sake He would turn our captivity: and He has answered not. The darkness has become more dark, the light of the future more dim and indistinct. Now the clocks are striking eleven; the bells are ceasing! in another moment not a sound will break the stillness.

Oh, thank God for Sunday! I could repeat it with my pen, as I have done with my heart, a thousand times. No one can truly estimate the blessings of the day, until he shall have gone through the persecution which has of late been mine. How infinite the wisdom, how unsparing the bounty, that appointed one day in seven as a day of *rest!* One half the world go down to their graves, and have never appreciated the boon in all its fulness. Let me lay aside my pen and think, and enjoy it while I may: to-morrow will come.

*May, Tuesday.*—Surely there is a spell upon all I undertake: I had almost written curse, but let me not think that yet. If the morning opens with fair auspices, the night brings disappointment. Margaret is almost wearied out, and her naturally calm temper at moments gives way. Not for herself: but for the children I can see that her spirit is nearly broken. Still she bears up wonderfully.

We were standing last evening at the window, without light, when little Cary ran in. "Mamma, we want to dance. Will you come and tune to us?"

"Not to-night, darling. My head aches. You must dance to your own tunes to-night."

"Oh dear! And Jemima's cross, and won't answer when we ask her. Mamma, do you know what Isabel says?—she says she wishes we had our piano again, and the nice music-stool that turned round, and she says I was too little to remember them. Why have we not got them now?"

"Because—they were left in the old house, Cary."

"What a shame! When shall we go back to that house, mamma?"

"Some time," returned Margaret, "or to one as good." And Cary danced away again.

"You spoke earnestly to the child, Margaret," I said. "Spoke as if you had faith."

"I have faith; trusting, earnest faith that this terrible time will come to an end. I wish I could see you, Adam, with more of it."

"I had faith also, until I was wearied out."

"I know we have waited long; and there are times when I give way to despondency: but the mood soon changes again. A bright evening after a rainy day, a bit of blue sky peeping out of the leaden clouds, a green leaf budding on a wintry tree, the first promising glimmer of the new moon—all these speak hope to my inward spirit."

Time was when I thought as my wife does. I was even more sanguine than she. When despair was ready to overtake me, I have said, Courage and patience! courage and patience! and so buoyed myself up. But day succeeded day, week followed week, month replaced month, and year gives turn to year; and there is no change.

*Friday.*—I can no longer rest at night, for the harrassing annoyances and disappointments that make up the day are repeated with vivid intensity in my dreams. Towards morning especially, my mind is busy with the previous day's persecutions, the doubting dread of the one forthcoming. All is enacted and re-enacted with terrible distinctness, and I awake weary and unrefreshed from imaginary evils, to get up and live over again the reality.

*Wednesday.*—Gibbons's house wants a clerk. I am going to apply for it. Salary £100 a year. Margaret looked grave when I mentioned the amount, and heaved a deep sigh. "But it is better than nothing, Adam," she said. Better than nothing! Yes, it will keep body and soul together until we can turn ourselves round. "To-morrow morning," I said aloud, "I will go there." "Mind you go in time," answered my wife.

*Thursday Night.*—I did go. I was unsuccessful. It is ever so. The second partner, Snail, a man who was once proud to shake my hand, coldly said they should prefer engaging one who had been brought up to warehouse business, absolutely hinting that he thought me too much of a gentleman. I passed by the Thames on my way home to-night, and thought how calmly one might lie there underneath the waters, *if one could but lie there undisturbed for ever.*

*Monday Morning.*—The commencement of another week of pain. This time yesterday I had at least some hours of peace before me. I was reading last night the Book of Job. It deceived my mind into hope. Who was afflicted as he was? and yet "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning."

But, have I Job's spirit of resignation? Why deceive myself? No. Before these dark misfortunes fell upon me, had I lost my children at one fell swoop, as he did, rather than have bowed my head in submission, I should have cried out as did David for Absalom—Would God I had died for thee, my child, my child! Yet I feel now that I could bless the hand which removed them all; removed them from the storms of this world to shelter them in the bosom of a Father, willing and more able to protect them than I am. Alone, I should not care for my misfortunes. I would go out from all who knew me; roam the country in search of work; break stones upon the road—anything for a crust; and wait for better times.

*Tuesday.*—I must carry out the project I have had so long running in my head, and apply to Lewis. We played together in boyhood, we were inseparable in youth, in manhood friends. He has it amply in his power to assist me, and I cannot think that he would want the will. A hundred pounds, to him, would be nothing; to me, salvation. With such a sum in hand, I believe I could extricate myself. Part of it would pay what we owe in this neighbourhood, and the rest I could use to good account. As it is, my whole time is taken up in endeavouring to obtain that which will enable us to go on and live for another day. We must exist: but we could eat hard fare, and endure many privations, if we had but peace from without. Let us be enabled to surmount this wearing struggle, endure on in retirement a little longer, and perhaps in time——Oh this hope! how it comes stealing in!

"Our misfortunes have taught me one thing," observed Margaret, as we sat together last night, after the children were in bed.

"I should have thought they had taught you many things, Margaret. What is it?"

"That those we are apt to term 'the poor' are not the class who most need relief. Just as these dreadful troubles came on ——"

Margaret's tale was suddenly cut short. Late as the hour was, a man came dunning me for money, and stayed to abuse me because I could not pay him.

*Thursday Morning.*—My dear little Algernon has just come to me—"Papa, look at my shoes! All the toes out. I can't go to school like this, for the boys made game of me yesterday, and asked why I wore such things."

"They must be mended, Algie."

"But they won't mend any more. The sides are worn away and the

heels are off. Mamma says they will not. And I am ashamed of my clothes, all the fellows look at them so."

I cannot buy him any shoes to-day. Perhaps by night I may have some luck. I have told him to remain at home. Shabby, and shoeless, and made game of! My poor boy, who was destined for Eton!

There's a man advertised for in this morning's paper, to copy deeds at his own house, at so much per folio. I shall hasten to town and go after it.

*Thursday Night.*—Still no money. A shilling or two for the pressing wants of the hour, and that is all. Algernon must still remain at home. A knock at the door. Eugh! how I shiver to hear those knocks! Oh—the schoolmaster has sent his compliments and wishes to know why Master Grainger was not at school. An excuse to be made there.

I went after the copying and had my usual luck. They had made arrangements, and did not require me.

Margaret says she has had a wretched day. One or two pressing creditors have called, and been loud and angry; Algernon, boy-like, has been worrying and troublesome; and Jemima, the old servant who has clung to us in our misfortunes, partly from affection, partly because we have not had it in our power to discharge her, has been in one of her evil tempers, finding fault with everything, and reproaching Margaret with the non-payment of her wages. Poor Jemima! she does work; washing and everything falls to her; and in her better moods she asks if I think she will leave her poor mistress to do it all; but when her temper breaks out, there is no bearing the house. No peace in-doors, no peace out. What a life is ours!

*June, Monday.*—Yesterday we had a good dinner, good and plentiful. How sincerely I thanked God in my heart when we sat down to it, He alone can tell. The paraded formal grace usually offered up, how much of lively thankfulness does that contain? Ah, we must undergo the pangs of hunger, continued, repeated, daily-recurring hunger, ere we can understand the gratitude due to Heaven for its bounteous supply of daily food.

I sometimes catch myself envying the street beggars, for they at least have not an appearance to keep up. How is it that some people seem to bask away their lives in flowers and sunshine? From the cradle to the grave, their path never seems to be overshadowed by adversity. Yet, it may be, that they have some secret sorrow: a great ugly skeleton in the closet: all the more consuming from the very concealment it has to observe to the world.

*Friday.*—I have been telling Margaret my project of applying to Lewis. She is over-sanguine: thinks he cannot refuse: wonders I never thought of it before. I will not delay.

*Monday.*—I begin the week in hope. How shall I end it? To-day I go to Lewis. Knock, knock, knock! I must put them off again. I trust for a day or two only.

*Friday Night.*—Thank Heaven for the hope this day has brought forth. I could not see Lewis until this morning: he was out of town. He received me cordially. I explained all my circumstances to him, and asked for the loan of £100. He said cheerfully that he would consider of it, and see what he could do. Saturday, the next day, he should be very busy, but I might go in and see him on Monday morning. I feel sure of the money now: if it were not his intention to lend it, he would have declined at once. Thank God! thank God!

*Saturday Night.*—What an evening this has been! I have told them to come on Monday night or Tuesday morning, and they shall be paid.

*Monday Night,* 12 *o'clock* P.M.—The clocks are tolling the knell of the departed day: would they were tolling it for me! I cannot much longer support this wretched existence—despair and disappointment, disappointment and despair! I was at Lewis's by ten o'clock, and waited some minutes before he came in, minutes to me of unutterable agitation. A refusal I dared not comtemplate: *yet, a refusal came.* He had consulted his partner, he said, who was not willing to advance the loan: had I been able to propose a responsible security for its repayment, they might have entertained it. And I had told this man all my situation! this man who, independent of his large yearly gains, is worth thousands and thousands! To have given me hopes on Friday! To make my request to him a matter of business! Friendship such as ours has been!

And I have walked about this day foodless, and have come home penniless, dead beat both in body and mind. To-morrow must come. I promised to pay them, and they will all be here thick and threefold.

I can no longer bear up against my fate. My children, my wife look to me for succour, and I cannot give it. There is one thought always pressing itself upon my brain—that, if I were no more, friends would rally around my wife and children. I have asked myself how this thought dares to come to me, and I have hitherto thrust it away; but I will do so no longer. It is the only course open to me.——Margaret is calling to know what I am sitting up for.

*Tuesday Evening.—The last of my existence.*—Father! Thou withholdest Thy mercy from me in this world, but surely Thou wilt not in the next. Pardon, pardon if I come home to Thee before my time! I can no longer support this life, my persecutions are greater than I can bear. Surely sufferings such as mine never fell on man. My prayers have ascended in vain. I have implored for succour, and Thou

answerest not. Not for wealth and luxury : a morsel of bread, a drink of water, a roof to cover us, *and peace.* And this not in idleness : I would work for it from the rising of the sun till its going down. Others can find means of subsistence, but I cannot. It is a curse that is upon me.

That Thou hast abandoned me is too sure, or in this, the last depths of my despair, there would steal to me a glimmering of hope. I have prayed for strength, for comfort, and it comes not to me. Oh ! Thou who readest all hearts, Thou readest mine, and Thou seest how I am driven to Thee. Forgive me this last act ! Jesus, supplicate for me ! I come, I come. Father, Father ! reject me not for ever.

## II.

Adam Grainger was alone in his sitting-room. An ugly weapon of polished steel lay at his elbow, which he had brought down from his bed-chamber. He was writing the last words when a knock at the house-door was heard, and then his wife entered the room, a couple of bottles in her hand. He had deemed himself secure from interruption, and he started like a detected criminal, as he threw his pocket-handkerchief over the razor.

"Adam," cried his wife, "here's a curious thing ! The Claytons have sent us a present of some brandy."

"Claytons !" echoed Mr. Grainger. "Who are the Claytons ?"

"The people who live at Lime Villa : that beautiful house higher up. I was talking to Mrs. Clayton the other day about her plants and flowers. She has seen me stand to admire them through the gate, and we have struck up a speaking acquaintanceship."

"Very strange ! What should the people send brandy to us for ?"

"It does seem strange, but there can be no mistake. Their man-servant brought it, with his master's compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Grainger, and begged they would use these two bottles of French brandy. I heard he was a large West-end wine-merchant. We will open one to-night."

"I tell you there must be a mistake, Margaret. Strangers are not likely to send brandy to me."

"Oh, Adam, they are kind-looking people : who knows but they may have an idea that we are in need ? I know it is all right."

"My dear, the world is not so romantic."

Mrs. Grainger left the room, taking one of the bottles. He hoped she was gone for some time, and turned to his journal to write a word of farewell to her.

The clocks have just chimed nine : in ten minutes, Margaret, your husband will have ceased to exist. My love, my wife, forgive me ! and you *will*, for you alone know how wretched has been my existence.

Algernon! Isabel! Caroline! Walter! obey your mother in all things; and, when you grow up, cherish and support her better than I have been able to do. I would steal up-stairs, and kiss farewell to you in your unconscious slumbers, but that my heartstrings would break with the effort. Margaret, when they are of an age to hear it, pray to them to forgive their father: tell them it was for them, for you, that his sufferings became unbearable. Alone in the world he could have borne and braved all. God bless you all! Margaret, my only love, farewell for ever!

At this moment Mrs. Grainger suddenly returned to the room, several things in her hands.

"Look here, Adam, I have broken-in the cork. That's the fault of the fork. What a vast many things we shall want when we go into real housekeeping again! Had any one offered me a present of a cork-screw this morning, I should have declined it as having no use for one."

"Why, what are you going to do?" he asked. "What's that hot water for?"

"To make some brandy-and-water. I boiled it up on some of Jemima's wood. We shall relish our supper of dry bread now, but it was terribly dry before. We must dispense with sugar, Adam."

"I don't want any brandy-and-water," he returned, speaking irritably, for he was vexed at these interruptions. "I have some writing to do, and wish to be alone."

"Do your writing to-morrow. We will keep festival to-night. It is not often we have French brandy to keep it on. What a treat after our wretched day!"

"I never knew before that you cared for brandy-and-water, Margaret."

"Oh, Adam, you know I never have. But in our poor condition, our need of nourishment, it seems like a godsend. I think I can understand how it is that the very poor so often take to drinking. Their physical need induces it."

Something called her again from the room. In his infatuation he determined not to lose a moment. He lifted the handkerchief, and grasped the razor. Still not in time, for her hand was heard too soon on the handle of the door. He dashed the dangerous weapon back again with a muttered word; it might have been a curse; and, taking up the brandy bottle, shook it about and pretended to be looking through it; anything to hide his confusion, coward that he was. She happened to glance at him as she set down the glasses and a plate of bread, and was startled.

"Adam! how strange you look! Quite wild. Are you ill?—feverish?"

"I think I am," he groaned, relinquising the bottle, and pressing his hands upon his temples.

"The brandy-and-water will do you good. Make it, please. It is all ready."

"Do you give brandy for fever, Margaret?"

"Yes, for such fever as yours; which arises from want of support. Make it at once, or the water will be getting cold."

He rose mechanically, and it is probable that his shaking hand may have poured more brandy than he intended into both glasses. Mrs. Grainger silently added additional water to hers after tasting it; but he drank his. Suddenly she burst out laughing. He looked up reprovingly; her gay mood did so jar upon his nerves.

"Adam, I cannot help it. I was thinking suppose the man should come for the brandy again. How foolish we should look!"

"You are merry to-night!"

"I am so pleased at our delicious supper. I wish Jemima had not gone to bed, I would take her some; but she has had a hard day's work and was tired. And for it to come so unexpectedly! We never know what things may turn up."

"Or one hour what the next may bring forth."

She talked on, thankful to cast aside care for one brief moment, but he only chafed at her sitting there with him. The cordial had warmed him, had soothed his broken spirit, and he leaned back in his chair, almost in enjoyment, but his fatal resolution abated not one jot in its force. Hoping to drive her from the room, he kept silence, and at last shut his eyes and feigned sleep. It succeeded, for she left the room and now the opportunity was come.

He rose upright in his chair, determined not again to lose it. Yet he did pause for an instant or two. His thoughts were turning to chaos: all things of his life seemed to be before his sight, and yet nothing. He stood on the confines of this life, on the threshold of Eternity: one minute more, and he would have entered on its mysteries for ever. *Eternity! . . . . for ever! . . . . his own act!*

He made an effort to rid himself of the thoughts that were crowding on him. He untied his neckcloth, and it fell to the ground. Even in that last moment he was conscious of this, and picked it up again.

He was sick at heart. Suspense, dread, fear overwhelmed him, shaking him with agony as one in a convulsion. Yet, with all this, there was no repenting, no turning from his self-willed doom. "Now or never!" he muttered; "if I hesitate I am lost." *Lost!*

He threw aside the handkerchief and took up what was under it. He raised his hand. One convulsive shudder, and Adam Grainger's spirit was in the other world.

But to what had he hastened? oh, horror, horror! The pen cannot write it; words cannot utter it; living, waking beings cannot imagine it. Mercy, mercy upon him and all such! Fellow-creatures, cease not, cease never to supplicate for these mistaken outcasts. They were

pilgrims like ourselves, known and dear to many of us, living in hope here, waiting for a Hereafter: it was but a moment's rashness, a moment's despair, yet one that we are taught forfeits Heaven. Oh let us strive to atone for them! we, who still have the privilege of praying, let us pray for them untiringly, unceasingly! The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

To be dead, and yet alive: to be in the next world, yet awake to what was passing in this: surrounded by woe unutterable, and hope gone for ever! Oh fool, fool! he had talked, in life, of "despair," of "hope deserting him;" the film had fallen from his eyes now. As a grain of sand to the desert, a drop of water to the ocean, was the duration of his mortal existence in comparison with Eternity. And he had refused to encounter its short-lived trials: he had shrunk from the insignificant frowns of the race around him, suffering, weak, finite beings like himself, and rushed into the presence of his outraged Creator. Did he think to gain Heaven by his mad exit? What *had* he gained? Oh, short-sighted man! most miserable!

Adam Grainger had passed by his own act from time to Eternity, and the wide flood-gates of retribution were thrown back, and the waters of repentance came rushing on to his soul. He writhed and struggled with the torrent; but on, on it came, and surrounded him. Repentance such as we can feel—what was it to his? He strove to tear himself in his anguish, to curse himself for his rash presumption, to howl aloud in his sharp torment; *but he dared not kneel and pray to God;* he might not call upon his Saviour; he had forfeited that privilege for ever. And alas! how short-sighted had been his wisdom! for, behold, there, at a little distance, was a bright cloud, no bigger than a speck, and he saw that it had been coming towards him, charged with relief and recompense. Now it was arrested on its way, and was vanishing into air, for he himself had rendered its mission futile.

He stood in the spirit, and watched them as they crowded to view the lump of clay, which he had cast aside: their comments, though whispered but in the heart, were loud enough to him. When the first shock of pity was past, dastard, wicked! were the best names they gave him. To desert his wife and children! to abandon them in their helplessness to a world which he had found so stern! His sons, wanting the guiding hand of a father, might grow up degraded men; his daughters to—what in life he would not have dared to glance at. Woe, woe, unutterable woe! Woe and torture upon his soul, by day and by night, until the hour of doom!

They brought it in "Insanity," and the scanty funeral left the house for the church, bearing the remains to the place where they would be left to moulder. *He* followed in its wake. He saw, now, the utter mockery of the pomp and pride sometimes made to attend the dead. The couriers en avant, as we say of other shows, bearing their distin-

guishing batons; the decorated heads of the stately horses; the velvet trappings sweeping the ground; the majestic plumes rising over the death-carriage; the train of attendants, carriages and feathers and trappings, carriages and feathers and trappings still again, a long line of them; a coffin emblazoned with enough silver to tempt the cupidity of the living, whilst what it contains, that for which the show is made, is more loathsome than anything above the earth or below it. But where is the spirit? Following, as his was.

The curate read the service for the dead: little fear that any higher dignitary would attend to bury such as he. "*Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life* ——"

He tore about the church in dire anguish—*we* cannot picture such; he would have screamed aloud, but that sound was denied him; he would have dashed himself with frantic violence against the gravestones; all in vain. Until the Day of Judgment his punishment was confined to mental torture: afterwards—— In his convulsive throes he swept by Algernon, and the boy shuddered and sobbed: was he conscious that some blighting influence had passed him?

Oh, that he could undo his work!—that he could undo his work! He had talked of "tasting the quiet of the grave." There was no grave. The shell he had cast off lay in the grave, not the spirit.

The space around was of awful immensity, beyond human comprehension; its colour a dull, gloomy lead. On its confines appeared a glimmering of shining light, telling of the realms he had lost, and of Him who made their brightness: and whenever his vision encountered that spot, a dreadful fear shattered him, such as we can only experience in a dream. The living God was there; the God whom he had rejected; and he knew that he must yet be brought before Him for judgment. But not yet; not, as it seemed, for ages; and, until then, he was doomed to whirl unceasingly about, his horrible remorse tearing at his heart-strings. But it appeared that some power was impelling him towards that bright spot now. He struggled to resist; to bear back; no! nearer and nearer it urged him. "It is not time," he screamed; "it is not time!" And with a yell, as of madness, he—awoke.

He awoke. These horrors, which had visited Adam Grainger, were but a dream. When he had leaned his head back in his chair to feign sleep, hoping so to get rid of the presence of his wife, sleep had indeed mercifully overtaken him.

The large drops of agony stood upon his brow. He shook, as with an ague, from head to foot. He was still in uncertainty: was all *that* real, or had he indeed not lost Heaven? Mrs. Grainger, who had been watching him in his sleep, came forward.

"Margaret! Margaret!" he hoarsely gasped, "which is reality? Am I here by your side, a living man?"

"I don't know what can have been the matter with you," she answered. "You fell asleep soon after drinking the brandy-and-water, and I think you must have had a troubled dream—a nightmare. You have been so much disturbed in it; and you woke with a positive scream."

He shook and shivered still, staring in affright. Not yet could he take in the mercy which had been vouchsafed him.

"Adam, look here. I took up your handkerchief to throw over your head, and there lay your razor. What did you bring it down for?"

"Margaret, that razor ——" He looked at her, and stopped for utterance. The truth flashed on her mind, and she cried out with a wild cry, as she threw herself on her knees before him.

"Oh, Adam! what frightful project is this? We have borne much, we can bear more, we will bear all. *I* can, whilst you are left to me."

He was now weeping tears of relieved agony, thankful for the dreadful vision which had saved him.

"You have destroyed my peace of mind," she wailed. "With this fear hanging over me, I shall never know another moment's rest."

"I was about to destroy myself, Margaret; I avow it now. And God has saved me by a dream—nay, a vision. I thought I had done it; and the horrors ——" He stopped, and shivered again. She clasped him tightly.

"Tell it me, Adam."

"I cannot tell it you. No human words could convey an impression of its features. But it has saved my soul."

"You will bear all in future, as you have done, without a thought of lifting your hand against yourself?" she implored. "You promise me?"

"Ay, Margaret; bear all and welcome all. No matter what it may be, it will be to me like Heaven, after what I have escaped from. How long did I sleep?"

"Half an hour."

"But half an hour!" he echoed. "All that dread horror in half an hour!"

"Adam," she said, in a low voice, "this must have been a fearful dream."

"Ay. Although it came from God."

It was close upon ten, when they heard a knock at the street door. Mrs. Grainger rose to open it. She came back, looking scared.

"Oh, Adam! the words I spoke in jest have turned out true. The man has come for the brandy. It was brought here in a mistake. He says a family of the name of Grainger, friends of his master's, have

moved into a house to-day, lower down, and that's where he ought to have taken the brandy. What shall we do?"

"Sit down, Margaret, and make your mind easy. I will speak to the man."

"But how embarrassing for you?"

"My dear wife, nothing will ever appear embarrassing to me again. What I have gone through this night has rendered all things light to me here. I shall never more shrink from a fellow-creature."

Mr. Grainger went out to the waiting servant, returned to him the one unopened bottle, and gave him a message to deliver to his master and mistress, to the effect that he would call and explain on the morrow.

Accordingly, in the morning he betook himself to Lime Villa. And upon entering the gate, he fell nearly into the arms of an elderly gentleman, who was standing without his hat by the side of Mrs. Clayton, evidently quite at home, and finding fault with something that did not please his taste in the arrangement of the flower-beds. Recognition was mutual. Adam knew him at once for Mr. Phelps, a director in the insurance company. The insurance company that had once had him, Adam, for its chief clerk, or actuary: which valuable post he had thrown up in his insane mania for mining-speculation.

"I thought it must be you," said Mr. Phelps, holding out his hand. "When my niece here spoke of a Mr. and Mrs. Grainger living in a cottage hard by, something told me it was no other than you and your wife. Well, and how has the Great Trebeddon Mine finally turned out?"

Adam strove to answer calmly. But, what with the half-mocking question (though indeed only meant as a bit of harmless pleasantry) and the knowledge of how it had turned out and all it had brought; what with the sight of Mr. Phelps, calling up memories of the past happy days and his bitter folly; and what with his depressed physical state. Adam got into a little agitation. He began giving the best explanation he could give about the brandy to Mrs. Clayton; but the colour changed on his refined face as he spoke, and his breath became short.

"And so you tapped it," interrupted Mr. Phelps, with a hearty laugh; "and quite right too. *I* wonder you sent back the other bottle. If anybody left two bottles of best French brandy at my door as a present, I should not expect them to be fetched away again.—And now tell me how you are getting on," added the old director, passing his arm within Adam's to lead him about the garden for a chat, while Mrs. Clayton went in doors. "You don't look over strong,"—with a side glance at the worn but still attractive face.

A moment's debate with himself, and Adam put pride in his pocket and told him how. Told the whole truth. That he was not getting-on at all; had never got on since he threw up his place, but had gone

gradually downwards, so that often he and his had literally wanted bread.

"Ay," said Mr. Phelps. "It's just what those mining schemes and other such delusions often bring a man to. Has it cured you of speculating, Mr. Grainger?"

"Cured me!" repeated Adam with unnecessary emphasis. "I would rather take a clerkship at a hundred a year, though I knew I should have no rise from it in life, than embark in the best speculation that ever was set afloat. I have a *fear* of speculation now, sir."

"You regret your post with us, I suppose?"

Adam Grainger turned away his face. The remark told on his stricken heart. Of all the mistaken actions of his past life, the throwing up of that post was the one that brought him most remorse, the one he could least bear to recal.

"Would you like to come back to us?" asked the old gentleman, detecting the emotion, and breaking a somewhat long silence.

Adam Grainger turned his head, half startled at the words. "*Sir?*"

"I don't see why you should not, Grainger. To tell the truth, we have never been well suited since you left us. Smith, who succeeded you, came into a fortune, and threw up the post; and Macpherson, who stepped in after him, has lapsed into bad habits. Drinks, in fact. At a meeting of the board yesterday, it was determined to discharge him."

Adam Grainger could not speak. The vista opening to him, uncertain though it yet was, took away all power.

"I don't promise it you absolutely," went on Mr. Phelps. "I must speak to the directors first. But I think I can arrange it. I am chairman now poor Gatherby's gone, you know; and a great deal lies with me. There's nobody would do for us so well as you. But mind, Grainger: you'd not begin again at twelve hundred a year. Macpherson has but nine."

Adam Grainger turned. His face was working, his trembling hands took those of old Mr. Phelps, his voice was broken with emotion, as he strove to say what the suggested hope was to him. The tears were running down his cheeks.

"Well, well, we'll see," said the kind old director, coughing down some feeling of his own. "I don't undertake to promise it at once; but—we'll see."

The tone and words bore their full assurance to the listener, and Adam Grainger felt as certain that the wonderful re-instalment would take place, the former forfeited prosperity be his again, as though he had that moment held it in his hand. And he knew that this was the one beautiful ray of brightness, that he had seen on its way to him in the dream.

Several years went by. Prosperity was theirs again. On a sunny

lawn in their new home, but seated under the shade of the clustering trees, they were gathered together—Adam Grainger, his wife, and their four children. The children had returned home that day for the mid-summer holidays and were showing their prizes.

"Walter has done the best of you all," said Mr. Grainger. "Don't you think so, Margaret?"

"Walter! Why, papa—why, mamma—he has only three, and I have five."

"Yes, Master Algernon, but remember you are six years older than he."

"He is not half so much up in English and French, even for a junior, as I am in the classics," returned Master Algernon, consequentially. "Look at Isabel's, papa."

"I have seen Isabel's. She has done well. But what about Cary's? where are hers?"

"I think it may be as well for you not to inquire after Cary's," interposed Margaret.

"Why, Cary? Do you mean to confess that you have earned none?"

"Oh, papa!—if they had given a prize for dancing, I should have gained that."

"She is always dancing," cried Isabel. "She cares for nothing else. Dancing and laughing."

"Well, well, they are appropriate to childhood. Care will come in time."

Two servants appeared bearing some choice fruit and cakes, which they placed on the table before their master and mistress. "Oh, what a nice treat!" exclaimed Caroline. "Is that to welcome us home from school?"

"Children, sit down and enjoy it," said their father. "This day is the anniversary of an eventful era in my life, and I would keep it as one of thanksgiving."

"What event was it?" asked the children.

"One by which I was in great peril."

"Peril of your life, papa?" inquired the eldest boy.

"Yes, Algernon, in peril of my life."

"And who saved you!"

"One that will save all who apply to Him."

"Ah, you mean God. Tell us about it, papa."

"It is not of a nature fitted for your years. You shall hear it when you are men and women."

"Did mamma know it?"

"Mamma did."

"And is it a year ago to-day?"

"It is several years ago."

"I know," cried the dancing Cary. "Papa was run over."

"No, Caroline, I was not run over. I think you stand most chance of encountering that calamity, if you fly about so heedlessly. You are dancing now."

"Papa, I expect it was during the time we were so poor. How very poor we were! *You* don't remember much about it," added Algernon, turning to his brother and sisters.

"I do," said Isabel.

"Ay, children, many's the morning I have got up, and did not know where to get you a bit of bread. Give me your hands, dear children, and listen to me. I am about to speak to you very seriously, and I must request you never to forget my words. You have spoken, Algernon, of the poverty we were in, but you cannot understand half its misery, half its embarrassment. It lasted so long that I rashly concluded I was forgotten by God: my heart, crushed with misery and wearied out, was almost broken, my spirit quite. I was tempted to abandon all, to—to——" here he placed his hands upon his temples—"to abandon you my children; but a singular event showed me my error, and led me to better thoughts. I no longer imagined I *could not* bear any ill which might be my lot, but resolved *to do so*, and I found that this resolution took away half its hardship. I recalled one of the Promises your mamma has often read to you, which I had chosen to forget—that, as our day is, so, if we will it, shall our strength be. From that time I no longer gave way to despair, but struggled on, doing my very best in reliant trust and hope. And—you see, my children, you know how we have been brought through — we have regained all we had lost, even former friends; content, plenty, and peace are ours, and those dark days are remembered but as a dream."

That these words of Adam Grainger, this true tale, could be read by all who, like him, feel tempted to believe they are abandoned of Heaven! Oh! let the would-be suicide remember them to his comfort, and *stay his hand.* Though his spirit be faint and weary and his health shattered; though hope has flown far away, and he looks around him, and finds nowhere, under the four winds of Heaven, to turn to for comfort or rest, and so despair has laid hold upon him, and he seizes in his madness the fatal weapon that will end his woes in this life; even at that last dread moment, LET HIM STAY HIS HAND. He knows not what an hour may bring forth; what God's compassion may have in store for him.

## NO MORE SEA.

THERE shall be no more sea : no wild winds bringing
Their stormy tidings to the rocky strand,
With its scant grasses, and pale sea-flowers springing
From out the barren sand.

No angry wave, from cliff and cavern hoary,
To hearts that tremble at its mournful lore ;
Bearing on shattered sail and spar the story
Of one who comes no more—

The loved and lost, whose steps no more may wander
Where wild gorse sheds its blooms of living gold,
Nor slake his thirst where mountain rills meander
Along the heathy wold.

Never again through flowery dingles wending,
In the hushed stillness of the sacred morn,
By shady woodpaths, where tall poppies, bending,
Redden the ripening corn.

Neath whispering leaves his rosy children gather
In the grey hamlet's simple place of graves,
Round the low tomb where sleeps his white-haired father,
Far from the noise of waves.

There shall be no more sea, no surges sweeping
O'er love and youth, and childhood's sunny hair.
Naught of decay and change, nor voice of weeping
Ruffle the fragrant air

Of that fair land within whose pearly portal
The golden light falls soft on fount and tree ;
Vexed by no tempest, stretch those shores immortal
Where there no more sea.

J. I. L.

J. SWAIN.

# THE ARGOSY.

*MAY* 1, 1874.

## IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

### CHAPTER XV.

#### THE EVE OF THE TRIAL.

WITHIN a week of Tom Bristow's first visit to Pincote, and his introduction to the Copes, father and son, Mr. Cope, Junior, found himself, much to his disgust, fairly on his way to New York. He would gladly have rebelled against the parental dictum in this matter, if he had dared to do so; but he knew of old how worse than useless it would be for him to offer the slightest opposition to his father's wishes.

"You will go and say good-bye to Miss Culpepper as a matter of course," said Mr. Cope to him. "But don't grow too sentimental over the parting. Do it in an easy, smiling way, as if you were merely going out of town for a few days. Don't make any promises—don't talk about the future—and, above all, don't say a word about marriage. Of course, you will have to write to her occasionally while you are away. Just a few lines, you know, to say how you are, and all that. No mawkish silly love-nonsense, but a sensible, manly letter; and be wisely reticent as to the date of your return. Very sorry, but you don't know how much longer your business may detain you—you know the sort of thing I mean."

When the idea had first entered Mr. Cope's mind that it would be an excellent thing if he could only succeed in getting his son engaged to Squire Culpepper's only child, it had not been without an ulterior eye to the fortune, which that young lady would one day call her own, that he had been induced to press forward the scheme to a successful issue. By marrying Miss Culpepper, his son would be enabled to take

up a position in county society such as he could never hope to attain either by his own merits, which were of the most moderate kind, or from his father's money bags alone. But dearly as Mr. Cope loved position, he loved money still better; and it was no part of his programme that his son should marry a pauper, even though that pauper could trace back her pedigree to the Conqueror. And yet, if the Squire went on speculating as madly as he was evidently doing now, it seemed only too probable that pauperism, or something very much like it, would be the result, as far as Miss Culpepper was concerned. Instead of having a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds, as she ought to have, would she come in for as many pence when the old man died? Mr. Cope groaned in spirit as he asked himself the question, and he became more determined than ever to carry out his policy of waiting and watching, before allowing the engagement of the young people to reach a point that would render a subsequent rupture impossible without open scandal —and scandal was a bugbear of which the banker stood in extreme dread.

Fortunately, perhaps, for Mr. Cope's view, the feelings of neither of the people chiefly concerned were very deeply interested. Edward had obeyed his father in this as in everything else. He had known Jane from a child, and he liked her because she was clever and good-tempered. But she by no means realized his ideal of feminine beauty. She was too slender, too slightly formed to meet with his approval. "There's not enough of her," was the way he put it to himself. Miss Moggs, the confectioner's daughter, with her ample proportions and beaming smile, was far more to his taste. Equally to his taste was the pastry dispensed by Miss Moggs's plump fingers, of which he used to devour enormous quantities, seated on a three-legged stool in front of the counter, while chatting in a free and easy way about his horses and dogs, and the number of pigeons he had slaughtered of late. And then it was so much easier to talk to Miss Moggs than it was to talk to Jane. Miss Moggs looked up to him as to a young magnifico, and listened to his oracular utterances with becoming reverence and attention; but Jane, somehow, didn't seem to appreciate him as he wished to be appreciated, and he never felt quite sure that she was not laughing at him in her sleeve.

"So you are going to leave us by the eight o'clock train to-morrow, are you?" asked Jane, when he went to Pincote to say a few last words of farewell. He had sat down by her side on the sofa, and taken her unresisting hand in his; a somewhat thin, cold little hand, that returned his pressure very faintly. How different, as he could not help saying to himself, from the warm, plump fingers of Matilda Moggs.

"Yes, I'm going by the morning train. Perhaps I shall never come back. Perhaps I shall be drowned," he said, somewhat dolorously.

"Not you, Edward, dear. You will live to plague us all for many a

year to come. I wish I could do your business, and go instead of you."

"You don't mean to say that you would like to cross the Atlantic, Jane?"

"I mean to say that there are few things in the world would please me better. What a fresh and glorious experience it must be to one who has never been far from home!"

"But think of the sea sickness."

"Think of being out of sight of commonplace land for days and days together. Think how delightful it must be to be rocked on the great Atlantic rollers, and what a new and pleasant sensation it must be to know that there is only a plank between yourself and the fishes, and yet not to feel the least bit afraid."

Edward shuddered. "When you wake up in the middle of the night, and hear the wind blowing hard, you will think of me, won't you?" he said.

"Of course I shall. And I shall wish I were by your side to enjoy it. To be out in a gale on the Atlantic — that must indeed be glorious!"

Edward's fat cheeks became a shade paler. "Don't talk in that way, Jane," he said. "One never can tell what may happen. I shall write to you, of course, and all that; and you won't forget me while I'm away, will you?"

"No, I shall not forget you, Edward; of that you may be quite sure."

Then he drew her towards him, and kissed her; and then, after a few more words, he went away.

It was just the sort of parting that his father would have approved of, he said to himself, as he drove down the avenue. No tears, no sentimental nonsense, no fuss of any kind. Privately he felt somewhat aggrieved that she had not taken the parting more to heart. "There wasn't even a single tear in her eye," he said to himself. "She doesn't half know how to appreciate a fellow."

He would perhaps have altered his opinion in some measure could he have seen Jane half an hour later. She had locked herself in her bedroom, and was crying bitterly. Why she was crying thus she would have found it difficult to explain: in fact, she hardly knew herself. It is possible that her tears were not altogether tears of bitterness—that some other feeling than sorrow for her temporary separation from Edward Cope was stirring the fountains of her heart. She kept on upbraiding herself for her coldness and want of feeling, and trying to persuade herself that she was deeply sorry, rather than secretly—very secretly—glad to be relieved of the tedium of his presence for several weeks to come. She knew how wrong it was of her—it was almost wicked, she thought—to feel thus: but, underlying all her tears,

was a gleam of precious sunshine, of which she was dimly conscious, although she would not acknowledge its presence even to herself.

After a time her tears ceased to flow. She got up and bathed her eyes. While thus occupied her maid knocked at the door.

Mr. Bristow was down stairs. He had brought some photographs for Miss Culpepper to look at.

"Tell Mr. Bristow how sorry I am that I cannot see him to-day," said Jane. "But my head aches so badly that I cannot possibly go down." Then when the girl was gone, "I won't see him to-day," she added to herself. "When Edward and I are married he will come and see us sometimes, perhaps. Edward will always be glad to see him."

Hearing the front-door clash, she ran to the window and pulled aside a corner of the blind. In a minute or two she saw Tom walking leisurely down the avenue. Presently he paused, and turned, and began to scan the house as if he knew that Jane were watching him. It was quite impossible that he should see her, but for all that she shrank back with a blush and a shy little smile. But she did not loose her hold of the blind; and presently she peeped again, and never moved her eyes till Tom was lost to view.

Then she went down stairs into the drawing-room, and found there the photographs which Tom had left for her inspection. There, too, lying close by, was a glove which he had dropped and had omitted to pick up again. "I will give it to him next time he comes," she said softly to herself. Strange to relate, her next action was to press the glove to her lips, after which she hid it away in the bosom of her dress. But young ladies' memories are proverbially treacherous, and Jane's was no exception to the rule. Tom Bristow's glove never found its way back into his possession.

Jane Culpepper had drifted into her engagement with Edward Cope almost without knowing how such a state of affairs had been brought about. When her father first mentioned the matter to her, and told her that Edward was fond of her, she laughed at the idea of Edward being fond of anything but his horses and his gun. When, later on, the young banker, in obedience to parental instructions, blundered through a sort of declaration of love, she laughed again, but neither repulsed nor encouraged him. She was quite heart-whole and fancy-free; but certainly Mr. Cope, Junior, bore only the faintest resemblance to the vague hero of her girlish dreams—who would come riding one day out of the enchanted Kingdom of Love, and, falling on his knees before her, implore her to share his heart and fortune for evermore. To speak the truth, there was no romance of any kind about Edward. He was hopelessly prosaic: he was irredeemably commonplace; but they had known each other from childhood, and she had a kindly regard for him, arising from that very fact. So, pending the arrival of Prince Charm-

ing, she did not altogether repulse him, but went on treating his suit as a piece of pleasant absurdity which could never work itself out to a serious issue either for herself or him. She took the alarm a little when some whispers reached her that she would be asked, before long, to fix a day for the wedding; but, latterly, even those whispers had died away. Nobody seemed in a hurry to press the affair forward to its legitimate conclusion: even Edward himself showed no impatience on the point. So long as he could come and go at Pincote as he liked, and hover about Jane, and squeeze her hand occasionally, and drive her out once or twice a week behind his high-stepping bays, he seemed to want nothing more. They were just the same to each other as they had been when they were children, Jane said to herself—and why should they not remain so?

But, of late, a slight change had come o'er the spirit of Miss Culpepper's dream. New hopes, and thoughts, and fears, to which she had hitherto been a stranger, began to nestle and flutter round her heart, like love-birds building in spring. The thought of becoming the wife of Edward Cope was fast becoming—nay, had already become, utterly distasteful to her. She began to realize the fact that it is impossible to keep on playing with fire without getting burnt. She had allowed herself to drift into an engagement with a man for whom she really cared nothing, thinking, probably, at the time that for her no Prince Charming would ever come riding out of the woods; and that, if it would please her father, she might as well marry Edward Cope as anyone else. But behold! all at once Prince Charming *had* come, and although, as yet, he had not gone down on his knees and offered his hand and heart for evermore, she felt that she could never love but him alone. She felt, too, with a sort of dumb despair, that she had already given herself away beyond recal—or, at least, had led the world to think that she had so given herself away; and that she could not, with any show of maidenly honour, reclaim a gift which she had let slip from her so lightly and easily that she hardly knew herself when it was gone.

The eve of Lionel Dering's trial came at last. The Duxley assizes had opened on the previous Thursday. All the minor cases had been got through by Saturday night, and one of the two judges had already gone forward to the next town. The Park Newton murder case had been left purposely till Monday, and by those who were supposed to know best, it was considered not unlikely that trial, verdict, and sentence would all be got through in the course of one sitting.

The celebrated Mr. Tressil, who had been specially engaged for the defence, found it impossible to get down to Duxley before the five o'clock train on Sunday afternoon. He was met on the platform by Mr. Hoskyns and Mr. Bristow. His junior in the case, Mr. Little, was

to meet him by appointment at his rooms later on. Tom was introduced to Mr. Tressil by Hoskyns as a particular friend of Mr. Dering's, and the three gentlemen at once drove to the prison. Mr. Tressil had gone carefully through his brief as he came down in the train. The information conveyed therein was so ample and complete that it was more as a matter of form than to serve any real purpose that he went to see his client. The interview was a very brief one. The few questions Mr. Tressil had to ask were readily answered, but it was quite evident that there was no fresh point to be elicited. Then Mr. Tressil went away, accompanied by Mr. Hoskyns; and Tom was left alone with his friend.

Edith had taken leave of her husband an hour before. They would see each other no more till after the trial was over. What the result of the trial might possibly be they neither of them dared so much as whisper. Each of them put on a make-believe gaiety and cheerfulness of manner, hoping thereby to deceive the other—as if such a thing were possible.

"In two days' time you will be back again at Park Newton," Edith had said, "and will find yourself saddled with a wife whom, while a prisoner, you were compelled to marry against your will. Surely, in so extreme a case the Divorce Court would take pity on you, and grant you some relief."

"An excellent suggestion," said Lionel, with a laugh. "I must have some talk with Hoskyns about it. Meanwhile, suppose you get your trunks packed, and prepare for an early start on our wedding tour. Oh! to get outside these four walls again—to have 'the sky above my head, and the grass beneath my feet'—what happiness—what ecstasy—that will be! A week from this time, Edith, we shall be at Chamounix. Think of that, sweet one! In place of this grim cell—the Alps and Freedom! Ah me! what a world of meaning there is in those few words!"

The clock struck four. It was time to go. Only by a supreme effort could Edith keep back her tears—but she did keep them back.

"Good bye—my husband!" she whispered, as she kissed him on the lips—the eyes—the forehead. "May He who knows all our sorrows, and can lighten all our burdens, grant you strength for the morrow!"

Lionel's lips formed the words, "Good-bye," but no sound came from them. One last clasp of the hand—one last yearning, heartfelt look straight into each other's eyes, and then Edith was gone. Lionel fell back on his seat with a groan as the door shut behind her; and there, with bowed head and clasped fingers, he sat without moving till the coming of Mr. Tressil and the others warned him that he was no longer alone.

As soon as Mr. Tressil and Hoskyns were gone, Lionel lighted up

his biggest meerschaum, and Tom was persuaded, for once, into trying a very mild cigarette. Neither of them spoke much—in fact neither of them seemed to have much to say. They were Englishmen, and to-day they did not belie the taciturnity of their race. They made a few disjointed remarks about the weather, and they both agreed that there was every prospect of an excellent harvest. Lionel inquired after the Culpeppers, and was sorry to hear that the Squire was confined to his room with gout. After that, there seemed to be nothing more to say, but they understood each other so well that there was no need of words to interpret between them. Simply to have Tom sitting there, was to Lionel a comfort and a consolation such as nothing else, except the presence of his wife, could have afforded him; and for Tom to have gone to his lodgings without spending that last hour with his friend, would have been a sheer impossibility.

"I shall see you to-morrow?" asked Lionel, as Tom rose to go.

"Certainly you will."

"Good night, old fellow."

"Good night, Dering. Take my advice, and don't sit up reading or anything to-night, but get off to bed as early as you can."

Lionel nodded and smiled, and so they parted.

Tom had called at Alder Cottage earlier in the day, and had seen Edith and Mrs. Garside, and had given them their final instructions. He had one other person still to see—Mr. Sprague, the chemist, and him he went in search of as soon as he had bidden Lionel good night.

Mr. Sprague himself came in answer to Tom's ring at the bell, and ushered his visitor into a stuffy little parlour behind the shop, where he had been lounging on the sofa in his shirt-sleeves, reading Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." And a very melancholy, careworn-looking man was this chemist whom Tom had come to see. He looked as if the perpetual battle for daily bread, which had been going on with him from year's end to year's end ever since he was old enough to handle a pestle, was at last beginning to daunt him. He had a cowed, woe-begone expression as he passed his fingers wearily through his thin grizzled locks: although he did his best to put on an air of cheerfulness at the tardy prospect of a customer.

Tom and the chemist were old acquaintances. Sprague's shop was one of the institutions of Duxley, and had been known to Tom from his early boyhood. Once or twice during his present visit to the town he had called there and made a few purchases, and chatted over old times, and old friends long dead and gone, with the melancholy chemist.

"You still stick to the old place, Mr. Sprague," said Tom as he sat down on the ancient sofa.

"Yes, Mr. Bristow—yes. I don't know that I could do better.

My father kept the shop before me, and everybody in Duxley knows it."

"I suppose you will be retiring on your fortune before long?"

The chemist laughed a hollow laugh. "With thirteen youthful and voracious mouths to feed, it looks like making a fortune, don't it, sir?"

"A baker's dozen of youngsters! Fie, Mr. Sprague, fie!"

"Talking about the baker, sir, I give you my word of honour that he and the butcher take nearly every farthing of profit I get out of my business. It has come to this: that I can no longer make ends meet, as I used to do years ago. For the first time in my life, sir, I am behindhand with my rent, and goodness only knows when and how I shall get it made up!" Mr. Sprague's voice was very pitiable as he finished.

"But, surely, some of your children are old enough to help themselves," said Tom.

"The eldest are all girls," answered poor Mr. Sprague, "and they have to stay at home and help their mother with the little ones. My eldest boy, Alex, is only nine years old."

"Just the age to get him off your hands—just the age to get him into the Downham Foundation School."

"Oh, sir, what a relief that would be, both to his poor mother and me! The same thought has struck me, sir, many a time, but I have no influence—none whatever."

"But it is possible that I may have a little," said Tom kindly.

"Oh, Mr. Bristow!" gasped the chemist, and then could say no more.

"Supposing—merely supposing, you know," said Tom, "that I were to get your eldest boy into the Downham Foundation School, and were, in addition, to put a hundred-pound note into your hands with which to pay off your arrears of rent, you would be willing to do a trifling service for me in return?"

"I should be the most ungrateful wretch in the world were I to refuse to do so," replied the chemist earnestly.

"Then, listen," said Tom. "You are summoned to serve as one of the jury in the great murder case to-morrow."

Mr. Sprague nodded.

"You will serve, as a matter of course," continued Tom. "I shall be in the court, and in such a position that you can see me without difficulty. As soon as the clock strikes three, you will look at me, and you will keep on looking at me every two or three minutes, waiting for a signal from me. Perhaps it will not be requisite for me to give the signal at all—in that case, I shall not need your services; but whether they are needed or no, your remuneration will in every respect be the same."

"And what is the signal, Mr. Bristow, for which I am to look out?"

"The scratching, with my little finger—thus—of the left-hand side of my nose."

"And what am I to do when I see the signal?"

"You are to pretend that you are taken suddenly ill, and you are to keep up that pretence long enough to render it impossible for the trial to be finished on Monday—long enough, in fact, to make its postponement to Tuesday morning an inevitable necessity."

"I understand, sir. You want the trial to extend into the second day; instead of being finished, as it might be, on the first?"

"That is exactly what I want. Can you counterfeit a sudden attack of illness, so as to give it an air of reality?"

"I ought to be able to do so, sir. I see plenty of the symptoms every day of my life."

"They will send for a doctor to examine you, you know."

"I suppose so, sir. But my plan will be this: not merely to pretend to be ill, but to be ill in reality. To swallow something, in fact—say a pill concocted by myself—which will really make me very sick and ill for two or three hours, without doing me any permanent injury."

"Not a bad idea by any means. But you understand that you are to take no action whatever in the matter until you see my signal."

"I understand that clearly."

After a little more conversation, Tom went, carrying with him in his waistcoat pocket a tiny phial, filled with some dark-coloured fluid which the chemist had mixed expressly for him.

On the point of leaving, Tom produced three or four rustling pieces of paper. "Here are thirty pounds on account, Mr. Sprague," said he. "I think we understand one another, eh?"

The chemist's fingers closed like a vice on the notes. His heart gave a great sigh of relief. "I am your humble servant to command, Mr. Bristow," he returned. "You have saved my credit and my good name, and you may depend upon me in every way."

As Tom was walking soberly towards his lodging, he passed the open door of the Royal Hotel. Under the portico stood a man smoking a cigar. Their eyes met for an instant in the lamplight, but they were strangers to each other, and Tom passed on his way. Next moment he started, and turned to look again. He had heard a voice say: "Mr. St. George, your dinner is served."

He had come at last, then, this cousin, who had not been seen in Duxley since the day of the inquest—on whose evidence to-morrow so much would depend.

"Is that the man, I wonder," said Tom to himself, "in whose breast lies hidden the black secret of the murder? If not in his—then in whose?"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE TRIAL.

"How say you, prisoner at the bar: Guilty or Not Guilty?"

"Not Guilty."

There was a moment's pause. A slight murmur passed like a ripple through the dense crowd. Each individual item, male and female, tried to wriggle itself into a more comfortable position, knowing that it was fixed in that particular spot for hours to come. The crier of the court called silence where silence was already, and next moment Mr. Purcell, the counsel for the prosecution, rose to his feet. He glanced up at the prisoner for one brief moment, bowed slightly to the judge, hitched his gown well forward, fixed one foot firmly on a spindle of the nearest chair, and turned over the first page of his brief.

Mr. Purcell possessed in an eminent degree the faculty of clear and lucid exposition. His manner was passionless, his style frigid. He aimed at nothing more than giving a cold, unvarnished statement of the facts. But then the way in which he marshalled these facts—going, step by step, through the evidence as taken before the magistrates, bringing out with fatal clearness point after point against the prisoner, gradually wrapping him round, as it were, in an inextricable network of evidence from which it seemed impossible for any human agency to free him—was, to such of his hearers as could appreciate his efforts, an intellectual treat of a very rare order indeed. Even Lionel had to ask himself, in a sort of maze, "Am I guilty, or am I not," when Mr. Purcell came to the end of his exposition, and took breath for a moment while the first witness for the prosecution was being sworn by the clerk of the court.

That first witness was Kester St. George.

Mr. St. George looked very pale—his recent illness might account or that—but he showed not the slightest trace of nervousness as he stepped into the witness-box. It was noticed by several people that he kept his eyes fixed straight before him, and never once turned them on the prisoner in the dock.

The evidence elicited from Mr. St. George was—epitomised—to the following effect:—Was own cousin to the prisoner at the bar, but had not seen him since they were boys together till prisoner called on him in London a few weeks before the murder. Met prisoner in the street shortly afterwards. Introduced him to Mr. Osmond, the murdered man, who happened to be in his (witness's) company at the time. Prisoner, on the spot, invited both witness and Osmond to visit him at Park Newton. The invitation was accepted. Witness and Osmond went down to Park Newton, and up to the night of the

murder everything passed off in the most amicable and friendly spirit. On that evening they all three dined by invitation with Mr. Culpepper, of Pincote. They got back to Park Newton about eleven o'clock. Osmond then proposed to finish up the evening with a game at billiards. Prisoner objected for a time, but ultimately yielded the point, and they all went into the billiard-room. The game was to be a hundred up, and everything went on satisfactorily till Osmond accused prisoner of having played with the wrong ball. This prisoner denied. An altercation followed. After some words on both sides, Osmond threw part of a glass of seltzer-and-brandy into prisoner's face. Prisoner sprang at Osmond and seized him by the throat. Osmond drew a small revolver and fired at prisoner, but fortunately missed him. Witness then interposed, dragged Osmond from the room, and put him into the hands of his (witness's) valet, with instructions not to leave him till he was safely in bed. Then went back to prisoner, whom he found still in the billiard-room, but depressed in spirits, and complaining of one of those violent headaches that were constitutional with him. Witness himself being subject to similar headaches, recommended to prisoner's notice a certain mixture from which he had himself derived much benefit. Prisoner agreed to take a dose of the mixture. Witness went to his own bedroom to obtain it, and then took it to the prisoner, whom he found partially undressed, preparing for bed. Prisoner took the mixture. Then he and witness bade each other good night, and separated. Next morning, at eight o'clock, witness's valet brought a telegram to his bedroom summoning him to London on important business. He dressed immediately, and left Park Newton at once—an hour and a half before the discovery of the murder.

Cross-examined by Mr. Tressil :

The only one of the three who was at all the worse for wine on their return from Pincote was Mr. Osmond. Had several times seen him in a similar condition. On such occasions he was very talkative, and rather inclined to be quarrelsome. Osmond was in error in saying that prisoner played with the wrong ball. Witness, in his position as marker, was watching the game very carefully, and was certain that no such mistake was made. Osmond was grossly insulting ; and prisoner, all through the quarrel, acted with the greatest forbearance. It was not till after Osmond had thrown the brandy-and-seltzer in his face that prisoner laid hands on him at all. The instant after, Osmond drew his revolver and fired. The bullet just missed prisoner's head and lodged in the wall behind him. After Osmond left the room no animosity or ill-feeling was evinced by prisoner towards him. On the contrary, prisoner expressed his deep regret that such a fracas should have taken place under his roof. Had not the slightest fear that there would be any renewal of the quarrel afterwards, or would not have left for London next morning. Certainly thought that an ample apology

was due from Osmond, and never doubted that such an apology would be forthcoming when he had slept off the effects of the wine. Was never more surprised or shocked in his life than when he heard of the murder, and that his cousin was accused of the crime. It seemed to him too horrible for belief. Could not conceive of any possible motive that the prisoner could have for committing such a crime.

"Would you not almost as soon expect to have been the author of such a crime yourself?" asked Mr. Tressil.

Mr. St. George turned a shade paler than he was before, and for the first time he seemed to hesitate a little before answering the question. "Yes," he said at last, "I should almost as soon expect such a thing. In fact, I cannot, even now, believe that my cousin, Lionel Dering, is the murderer of Percy Osmond."

Mr. Tressil sat down, and Mr. Little rose to his feet.

"On the night of the quarrel prisoner complained to you of having a very violent headache?"

"He did."

"And you proffered to administer to him a dose of a certain narcotic which you had found to be efficacious in such cases yourself?"

"I did."

"How many drops of the narcotic did you administer to the prisoner?"

"Fifteen, in water."

"You saw him drink it?"

"I did."

"You yourself are troubled with violent headaches at times?"

"I am."

"At such times you administer to yourself a dose of the same narcotic that you administered to the prisoner?"

"I do."

"And you derive great benefit from it?"

"Invariably."

"How many drops of the narcotic do you take yourself on such occasions?"

"Fifteen, in water."

"Is that your invariable dose?"

"It is."

"Speaking for yourself, what is the effect it has upon you on such occasions?"

"It induces languor and drowsiness, and seems to deaden the pain. Its chief object is to insure a good night's rest—nothing more."

"How many years have you been in the habit of taking this narcotic?"

"At intervals, for a dozen years."

"You have therefore become habituated to the use of it?"

"To a certain extent, yes."

"But if you, after twelve years' practice, are in the habit of taking only fifteen drops, does it not strike you that that quantity was somewhat of an overdose for a man who had never taken anything of the kind before?"

"It did not strike me as being so at the time. The prisoner is a strong and healthy man, and his headache was a very violent one."

"But, in any case, the general effect would be to induce a sense of extreme drowsiness, which, in a little while, would result in a dull, heavy sleep—a sleep so heavy and so dull that the sense of violent pain would be deadened, and even lost for the time being?"

"Those are precisely the effects which might be expected."

"How soon, after a dose has been taken, does the feeling of drowsiness come on?"

"In about a quarter of an hour."

"Suppose, now, that after you had taken a dose of the narcotic, you wished, for some particular reason, to keep broad awake; suppose that you had some important business to transact—say, if you like, that you had a murder to commit—how would that be?"

"I should find it utterly impossible to keep awake. The feeling of drowsiness induced is so intense that your whole and sole desire is to sleep: you feel as if you wanted to sleep for a month without waking."

Mr. Little sat down and Mr. St. George left the witness-box. As he was stepping down into the body of the court his eyes met the eyes of Lionel Dering for the first time that day. It was but for a moment, and then Kester's head was turned deliberately away. But in that moment Lionel saw, or fancied that he saw, the self-same expression flash from his cousin's eyes that he had seen in them that night, now many months ago, when they recognized each other across the crowd on Westminster Bridge—a look of cold, deadly, unquenchable hate, that nothing but death could cancel, with which, to-day, was mingled a look of scornful triumph that seemed to say, "My turn has come at last." For one brief instant Lionel seemed to see his cousin's soul stand unveiled and naked before him.

As before, it was a look that chilled his heart and troubled him strangely. Kester had given his evidence in a perfectly fair and straightforward manner, without betraying the slightest animus against his cousin: indeed, he had distinctly stated more than once that he could not and would not believe that Lionel was guilty of the terrible crime for which he was arraigned, and the little sympathetic thrill which he threw into his soft musical voice at such times could hardly pass unnoticed by anyone. But how reconcile such tokens of goodwill and cousinly affection with the fact that he had never once spoken

a word to Lionel since they parted in the latter's bedroom on the night of the murder? Even at the inquest, and during the few days that elapsed after the murder before Lionel was committed for trial, his cousin had never come near him, or made any effort whatever to see him. Afterwards there had been vague news of his serious illness in London; but, even then, he might surely have written, or have dictated half-a-dozen lines, had it been only to say that he was too ill to come in person. But during all those weary days of waiting in prison there had come no word, no message, no token to tell Lionel that there was any such person as Kester St. George in existence.

And now, to-day, what did that look mean? To a man of Lionel's frank and unsuspicious disposition it seemed difficult, nay next to impossible, to believe that he must count his cousin, not as a friend, but as an enemy; and yet the conviction was beginning to dawn slowly upon him that such was indeed the case. But with the dawning of that conviction there was growing up in his mind a dim, vague suspicion, shapeless as yet, but hideous in its shapelessness, to which neither name nor speech had yet been given, but which began to haunt him day and night like some weird nightmare which it was impossible to shake off.

The next witness that was called was Martin Rooke.

Was in prisoner's employ as under-footman at Park Newton. Had been appointed specially to wait on Mr. Osmond, that gentleman having brought no servant with him. One of his duties was to call Mr. Osmond about nine o'clock every morning. Remembered the morning of the ninth of May very well: in fact, should never forget it as long as he lived. Went as usual about nine o'clock—it might be a few minutes before or a few minutes after the hour—to call Mr. Osmond. Found the door unlocked, as usual, and went in after knocking once. The room was quite dark, and the first thing witness did was to open the shutters. Then went up to the bed with the intention of calling Mr. Osmond. Saw at once what had happened. Mr. Osmond was lying on his back across the bed. After the first shock of the surprise was over he rushed downstairs and summoned assistance. All the servants, who were about, at once went upstairs with him into the room. Mr. Pearce, the butler, sent off post-haste for the nearest doctor. Then the rest of the servants, except witness, and Janvard, Mr. St. George's valet, went in a body to rouse Mr. Dering, who was sleeping in the room next to that of Mr. Osmond. One of Mr. Osmond's hands was open, the other was shut as if it were clasping something. Janvard took hold of the shut hand, and tried to open the fingers, when something fell from them to the floor. Janvard picked up the fallen article, when witness saw that it was a shirt-stud made of jet, set in filagree gold. "This stud is Mr. Dering's property," said Janvard. "I saw it in his shirt last night." Then witness and Janvard looked about the

room and under the bed, to see whether they could find a weapon of any kind, but could not. Then they left Mr. Osmond's room together, and went along the corridor to Mr. Dering's room. The door was wide open, and Pearce and the other servants were clustered round it. Witness peeped over the shoulders of the others, and saw prisoner standing in the middle of the room, looking like a man half dazed. There were red stains on his shirt-front, and there was a red-stained pocket-handkerchief lying at his feet. Janvard then showed prisoner the stud, and asked him whether it was his property. Prisoner said that it was, and asked him where he had found it. Janvard answered that he had found it in the hand of the murdered man. Prisoner sat down in the nearest chair, and witness thought he was going to faint. Then Pearce ordered everybody away, and went into the room and shut the door. Witness went back to Mr. Osmond's room, locked the door, and kept the key till the doctor came—with whom came also the superintendent of police.

The cross-examination of this witness elicited nothing of any importance in favour of the prisoner.

The next witness was Pierre Janvard.

Witness deposed that on the night of the eighth of May he was sitting up for his master, Mr. St. George, who, after his return from Pincote, where he had been dining, had joined prisoner and Mr. Osmond in the billiard-room. About midnight the bell rang, and on answering it he found Mr. Osmond seated on the bottom stair of the flight that led to the bed-rooms, and his master standing near him. Mr. St. George motioned to witness to get Mr. Osmond upstairs, and whispered to him that he was not to leave him till he had seen him safely in bed. Mr. St. George then went back to the billiard-room, and witness, after a little persuasion, managed to get Mr. Osmond as far as his own room. Mr. Osmond was half drunk, and was evidently much excited. He kept shaking his head, and talking to himself under his breath, but witness could not make out what he said. Had seen Mr. Osmond the worse for wine several times before. It was the duty of Rooke, the previous witness, to attend to him at such times; but Rooke was in bed, and he (witness) did not care to disturb him. After a little while Mr. Osmond was induced to get into bed. Witness lingered in the room for a few minutes till he seemed fast asleep, then left him, and neither knew nor heard anything more about him till Rooke rushed into the servants' hall, about nine o'clock next morning, with the news of the murder.

The rest of the evidence given by Janvard was little more than a recapitulation of that already given by Rooke. The evidence of the latter was confirmed with regard to the finding of the jet stud, and its recognition by the prisoner as his property. The stud itself was produced in court, and handed up to the jury for inspection.

The next witness was James Mackerith, M.D.

Dr. Mackerith began by stating that between nine and ten o'clock on

the morning of May ninth, a servant from Park Newton rode up to his house, and told him he was wanted, without a moment's delay, to look to a gentleman who had been murdered during the night. Witness got out his gig and started at once, and, meeting the superintendent of police on the way, that gentleman joined him on hearing his errand. Witness then went on to describe the finding and appearance of the body. Mr. Osmond had been stabbed through the heart with a knife or dagger. Death, which must have been almost instantaneous, had taken place at least five or six hours before the arrival of witness. There were no traces of any struggle. In all probability Mr. Osmond had been murdered in his sleep, or at the moment when he first opened his eyes, and before he had time to raise any alarm.

This witness was severely cross-examined by Mr. Tressil as to the possibility or otherwise of deceased having committed suicide, but nothing could shake him in his positive conviction that, in the present case, such a theory was utterly untenable. After the cross-examination of Dr. Mackerith was brought to an end the court adjourned for luncheon.

It was now two o'clock, and although there were three or four minor witnesses still to be examined, the general impression seemed to be that, if the jury were not long in making up their minds, the whole unhappy business would be brought to an end by six o'clock at the latest.

The prisoner, who, by the judge's instructions, had quite early in the day been accommodated with a chair, had listened with quiet attention to the progress of the case, but had not otherwise seemed to take more interest in it than any ordinary spectator might have done. He had a thorough comprehension from the first that the trial must go dead against him, but he never abated by one jot the quiet, resolute calmness of his manner. He was the same to-day as he had been on the first day of his imprisonment; only, to-day, he was the focus of a thousand inquisitive eyes; but he seemed as utterly unconscious of the fact as though he were sitting in the silence and solitude of his cell.

Hour by hour, as the trial went on, Tom sent brief notes by a messenger to Edith. In these notes all that he could say was that such and such a witness was under examination, and that everything was going on as favourably as could be expected. He knew how miserably ineffective such messages would be to allay the dreadful anxiety of her to whom they were addressed; but, as he asked himself, what more could he write? He took advantage of the few minutes allowed for luncheon to run up in person to Alder Cottage. Edith, that day, looked to him a dozen years older than he had ever seen her look before. Very pale and worn, but very calm also. But there was something in her eyes—the wild, yearning, terrified look of some poor hunted creature, as it were, who sees that for it there is no possible door of escape—which revealed to Tom something of the terrible struggle

going on within. It was but scant comfort that he could give her, but even for that she was grateful.

Tom found that he had still five minutes to spare when he got back to the court, so he hunted up Jabez Creede, whom he found haunting the purlieus of a neighbouring tavern, but apparently lacking either the money or the courage to venture inside. Tom supplied him with both, and, after two steaming glasses of rum and water, Jabez, with a sort of moist gratitude in his voice, declared that he felt better—"very much better indeed, thank you, Mr. Bristow, sir."

Tom, before going up to Alder Cottage, had contrived to have a brief note passed to Mr. Sprague. "I hope you are prepared, as I expect that I shall require your services."

On the reassembling of the court, Pearce, the butler at Park Newton, was the first witness called. He deposed to no material facts with which the reader is not already acquainted.

Next came Mr. Drayton, the Duxley superintendent of police, who told the story of his arrest of the prisoner, and how he had searched the house and grounds at Park Newton, but could find no trace of the weapon by which the deed had been done.

Next came a Mr. Whitstone, uncle to the murdered man, to whom, as the nearest relative in England, had been handed over the effects of the deceased. Mr. Whitstone deposed that, after a careful examination of the said effects, he had come to the conclusion that nothing had been stolen. So far as he could judge, no article of value was missing; and consequently, whatever other motive might have been at the bottom of the crime, it could not have been done for the sake of robbery.

With the examination of one or two minor witnesses the case for the prosecution came to an end.

There were no witnesses to call for the defence, and Mr. Tressil at once arose to address the court.

Tom Bristow was sitting close behind three or four junior counsel, and in full view of the jury. Whispered one of these fledglings to another, so that Tom could not help overhearing him: "That jet stud will hang him."

Answered the other: "Bet you a new hat old Tressil won't be on his legs more than thirty minutes."

"If the jury agree—and I don't see how they can disagree—the whole thing will be over by five thirty."

"Hope so, I'm sure. Meet you at eight for a game of pool?"

"I'm your man."

It was now twenty minutes to four o'clock.

Mr. Tressil began his speech for the defence. He had only got through the three or four opening sentences when one of the jury fell forward in the box, and, on being lifted up by two of his colleagues,

it was found that he had been suddenly seized with illness. The juryman in question was Mr. Sprague, the chemist. He was carried at once into the open air. A buzz of curiosity and excitement ran round the court. Mr. Tressil sat down. The judge yawned politely behind his hand, and the junior barristers passed a snuff-box surreptitiously from one to another. In the course of three or four minutes Dr. Mackerith, who had followed Mr. Sprague into the side room, came back into court. Addressing the judge, said he: "My lord, I regret to inform you that Mr. Sprague, the juryman, is very ill indeed, and that there seems little or no probability that he will be able to resume his duties for at least three or four hours to come."

His lordship looked very much discomposed, and blew his nose violently. "I never, in the whole course of my experience, recollect such a circumstance before," he remarked. "It is very annoying, and very unfortunate. It leaves me without any option in the matter. The court must stand adjourned till ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A BOTTLE OF BURGUNDY.

"THERE goes ten of 'em. Old Hoskyns can never want me at this time of night. At all events, if he don't come soon he won't find me here. If a man can't call his time his own after ten o'clock at night, he's no better than a slave."

The speaker was Jabez Creede, and he was sitting, with a short black pipe in his mouth, over a handful of fire—although the evening was a summer one—in the meanly furnished room which he called his home. In one hand he held a crumpled scrap of paper, the writing on which he now proceeded to read over again for the twentieth time. "Please not to be out of the way this evening, as I may possibly want you on important business.—J. HOSKYNS."

"Ugh!" growled Creede in disgust, as he flung the paper into the fire. "One might work one's heartstrings out for old Hoskyns, and there would never be an extra half quid for a poor devil on pay-day. I wish Mr. Bristow would take to the business. He's one of the right sort, he is. I wish——"

Here he was interrupted by a knock at the door. Presently his landlady entered. "Mr. Hoskyns is waiting below," said the woman. "He wants you to put on your hat and coat, and go with him."

Creede growled, put down his pipe, rose, yawned, stretched himself inducted himself into a shabby grease-stained brown overcoat, pulled his battered hat over his gloomy brows, and stumbled downstairs. He had been drinking heavily during the day—indeed, the days when

he did not drink heavily were few and far between—and both his gait and his tongue were in some measure affected by his potations.

Mr. Hoskyns was standing at the door, carrying in one hand the old blue-bag with which Creede had been familiar for years.

"Make haste, man alive," said the lawyer, impatiently. "I want you to go with me to the prison. Some most important evidence in our favour has just turned up, and I must see Mr. Dering at once. Here, catch hold of this."

"It's precious heavy," grumbled Creede as he took the bag.

"I daresay it is," answered Hoskyns, drily. "A good many clever brains have been at work on the contents of that bag. It's weighty with wisdom and common sense—two commodities, Jabez Creede, with which you have never been overburdened."

Not a word more passed between them till they reached the prison. The distance they had to walk was not great, and Mr. Hoskyns seemed anxious to get over the ground as quickly as possible, turning his face neither to right hand nor left, but going straight on till they halted at the gates. The great prison looked as black, silent, and deserted as some City of the Dead. Hoskyns gave a tug at the bell-pull, and was just refreshing himself with a pinch of his favourite mixture, when a little wicket in the door was opened, and through the bars two keen eyes peered out into the semi-darkness.

"Ha, Warde, is that you?" he said, nodding cheerfully to the pair of eyes. "Rather late to look in upon you, eh? But it's a matter of life and death—nothing less—that has brought us. Some most important evidence in our favour has turned up at the last moment, and it is imperative that I should see my client without a moment's delay."

"It's long past the hour for visitors, Mr. Hoskyns, as you know; and it would be as much as my place is worth to——"

"Where's the governor? where's my friend, Mr. Dux?" interrupted Hoskyns impatiently. "Fetch him. He'll put the matter right in a moment."

"Mr. Dux, sir, is somewhere in the town, and has not yet got home. But I'll fetch Mr. Jackson, sir; perhaps he may be able to do something for you."

Jackson, the chief night-warder, was quickly on the spot, and the case explained to him in a few words.

"It's against the regulations, of course, Mr. Hoskyns," said Jackson; "but, considering the emergency of the case, and in the absence of Mr. Dux, I will take upon myself the responsibility of allowing you to see Mr. Dering."

"Thank you very much, Jackson—very much indeed," said the lawyer, with a flourish of his huge yellow silk pocket-handkerchief. "I give you my word of honour that it's nothing less than a case of life and death."

The little low-browed side-door had been opened by this time, and Mr. Hoskyns went in, followed by Jabez Creede carrying the bag of papers. Creede had accompanied his employer to the gaol several times before, and his face was well known to the warders.

"I can only ask that, under the circumstances, you will make your visit as short a one as possible; and I hope, with all my heart, that you will be able to extricate Mr. Dering from his difficulty."

"Jackson, you may take my word for it," said Hoskyns seriously, "that, before to-morrow night at this time, Mr. Dering will be a free man."

"I am heartily glad to hear it, sir, and I wish you a very good night."

"Great heaven! Hoskyns, what has brought you here at this uncanny hour?" exclaimed Lionel, starting up from his pallet, on which he had thrown himself without undressing, as the lawyer and Creede were ushered into his cell and the door locked behind them.

"I have got great tidings for you, Mr. Dering. Splendid tidings!" said Hoskyns as he took the bag from Creede. "But sit down, sir, and don't excite yourself, because I shall require your very best care and attention during the next few minutes." Speaking thus, he took off his broad-brimmed hat and deposited it tenderly on Lionel's bed; then he drew a chair up to the little deal table, motioned Lionel to take the opposite chair, and Creede to take the third and only remaining one. The latter gentleman, either from innate modesty, or because he was afraid that his breath might smell too strongly of rum, took care to plant himself a yard or two away from the table.

"Yes, sir, some splendid news—something that will astonish the world to-morrow," continued the lawyer, as he dived into his bag, and fished therefrom a carefully folded sheet of foolscap. "Read that, Mr. Dering—read that carefully through," he said, as he handed the paper in question to Lionel. "But, above all things, control your feelings."

Lionel took the paper, opened it, and read. Mr. Hoskyns, leaning forward with his elbows on the table, took a pinch of snuff slowly and artistically, staring across, meanwhile, very hard at Lionel.

The paper ran as under:—

"Be careful not to betray me by word or look. I am here to effect your escape. Follow my lead in everything, and show no surprise at anything that I may say or do. "T. B."

Despite all his efforts to the contrary, Lionel could not keep his face from changing colour during the reading of these words.

"Very extraordinary, is it not," said the lawyer, as he took back the paper, "that this evidence should not have been forthcoming till the very last moment?"

"Very extraordinary, indeed," said Lionel, gravely.

He could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses. The voice, the features, the hair, the whiskers, the dress, the snuff-box, and the pocket-handkerchief, were all part and parcel of the genuine Hoskyns ; but when he looked intently through the gold-rimmed spectacles, he saw there the eyes—not to be mistaken for the eyes of any other man —of his faithful friend, Tom Bristow.

"I have shown the paper to Tressil," said Tom, still keeping up his assumed character, for it is hardly necessary to observe that Creede was not in the secret, "and he is quite agreed with me as to its vital importance. In fact it is at his request that I have come here to-night. There will be two or three telegrams to send off, and at least a couple of witnesses to hunt up, and all before the court opens in the morning. But before going into these details, I mean to drink your health—yes, sir, to drink your very good health, and to the happy acquittal which is sure to be yours in a few hours from the present time."

"I am much obliged to you, my dear Hoskyns," said Lionel, "but I'm afraid that my means of hospitality at present are limited to a copious supply of cold water."

"I've provided for that contingency, my dear sir, by bringing with me a bottle of prime old Burgundy from my own cellar," and he produced from his bag a tempting-looking black bottle with the cork already half drawn. "And now for a wineglass."

"I've nothing better to offer you than a tea-cup."

"Under the circumstances we will make shift with the tea-cup."

It was handed to him by Lionel. "The tea-cup turns out to be a coffee-cup," said Tom. With that, he went down on one knee, drew the cork half filled the cup with wine, and then offered it to Lionel.

"Not till you and Creede have both drunk to my health and acquittal," said the latter.

Tom took back the cup, gave utterance to an appropriate sentence or two, and tossed off the wine. Then going down again on one knee, he proceeded to refill the cup. The table was between him and Creede, and the latter, who had not failed to prick up his ears at the mention of something to drink, could not see clearly how Tom was engaged. He could hear the wine gurgle from the bottle into the cup, and that was enough for him. He did not see Tom's nimble fingers extract a tiny phial from his waistcoat pocket and pour the contents into the wine.

"Creede grumbled because my bag was so heavy," said Tom with a chuckle. "He wouldn't have said a word had he known what was inside it. Here, man, drink this off to Mr. Dering's very good health, and tell me whether you ever tasted anything better in your life."

He handed the cup to Creede, who rose somewhat unsteadily from

his chair to take it. "I drink to your very good health, Mr. Dering," he said, in a loutish sort of way, "and may you have a good deliverance." And carrying the cup to his mouth with a shaking hand, he drank off the contents at a draught.

Both Tom and Lionel were watching him keenly. He crossed the cell and put the cup down on the window-ledge, making a wry face as he did so. Then he sat down again on his chair.

"I am afraid, Creede, that you have vitiated your palate by accustoming it to inferior drinks," said Tom, "and that you don't know a good wine when you taste it."

"I'd sooner have one quartern of real old Jamaica than a gallon of that rubbish," growled Creede, with ill-disguised contempt.

"Now for business," said Tom. "There's not a minute to lose." And with that he fished a formidable-looking heap of documents from the depths of his bag. "Of course, the first thing to do," he went on, "is to get hold of our two new witnesses, Robinson and Davis. I think I can lay hands on them without much difficulty." And with that he went off into a long rigmarole respecting the supposed steps which it would be needful to take in the new state of affairs, but keeping a careful watch on Creede, meanwhile, out of the corners of his eyes.

Presently Creede's eyes began to glaze a little. Then they closed. Then they opened and closed again. Then his head sank forward on his breast, and his arms fell limply by his sides. Both the men were watching him intently. Suddenly Tom sprang from his seat, and was just in time to catch the inanimate body in his arms as it was sliding from the chair to the floor.

Tom held up a warning finger to Lionel, who had also started from his chair. For full two minutes he rested on one knee without moving, Creede supported in his arms. "He is fast now, I think," he said at last. "Help me to lift him on to the bed."

When the unconscious law-clerk had been laid on Lionel's bed, said Tom: "Now help me off with his coat, waistcoat, necktie, collar, and boots." It was a work of some little difficulty to accomplish all this, but it was done at last. Then, by Tom's instructions, Creede was stretched on the bed with his face to the wall, in the natural position of a sleeping man, and the bedclothes pulled over him.

Up to the present time Lionel had not asked a single question, but he could contain himself no longer. "In heaven's name, Bristow, what do all these strange proceedings mean?"

"They mean, Lionel Dering," said Tom, turning on him gravely, almost sternly, "that I am here to-night for the purpose of effecting your escape."

"Of effecting my escape!"

"What other purpose do you think would have brought me here in this disguise?"

"But—but——" stammered Lionel, and then he broke down utterly.

"Every minute is precious," said Tom. "There is no time to argue the case. Put yourself into my hands, and it will go hard but you will be a free man in an hour's time. Refuse my aid, and in less than three weeks from now you will be lying, a strangled corpse, in a murderer's grave."

Lionel shuddered and stared at Tom, but spoke not a single word.

"The trial is going against you, and to-morrow morning will see you condemned to death. Are you prepared to die by the hangman's hand for a crime of which you know nothing? Are you prepared to leave your young wife to the tender mercies of a world which will not fail to remember that her husband was a murderer? Live, man, live, if it be only for vengeance—if it be only to track out and hunt down the real murderer—if it be only to wipe the foul stain of blood from the name you bear—from the name which was borne by your father before you!"

"But why to-night?—why try to escape to-night?" pleaded Lionel. "The verdict has not yet been given. Who says that there is no chance of my acquittal?"

"I say it. Hoskyns says it. Tressil thinks it. You will be condemned to death to-morrow morning. After that, all chance of escape will be gone for ever. From that moment you will never be left alone till that most awful moment of all when you stand on the drop, pinioned, sightless, waiting for the bolt to fall. Dering, it must be to-night or never!"

"Bristow, I am in your hands, do with me as you will!" cried Lionel with emotion, and suiting the action to the word, he rose from the edge of the bed, and placed both his hands in those of his friend.

"That's all I ask, old boy," said Tom warmly. "Now sit down here, and obey my instructions, and don't bother me with any questions."

Lionel did as he was told, and sat down close under the gas light.

"There's no help for it," said Tom. "Both beard and moustache must be sacrificed."

"So be it," said Lionel, philosophically. "They will grow again if need be."

Next moment a pair of glittering scissors were playing round Lionel's mouth and chin, and in two minutes the entire mass of yellow beard and moustache was swept clean away. This, of itself, was almost enough to disguise Lionel beyond ordinary recognition. The chin and upper lip were left stubbly on purpose. Creede's face was nearly always stubbly—he rarely shaved more than once a week—and Lionel was now going to personate Creede. But Creede was very dark complexioned, while Lionel was just the opposite; so Tom's next operation was to produce from his wonderful bag a small bottle of some kind

of liquid, with which he proceeded to stain the hands, face, and neck of his friend. Next came a wig, which he had had specially made in London, and which was a very clever copy of the head of hair it was intended to simulate. It proved to be an excellent fit. With the fixing, by means of gum, of a scrap of ragged black hair under Lionel's chin—which was Creede's notion of a beard—the first part of Lionel's disguise was completed.

"Take off your coat, waistcoat, and cravat, and induct yourself into Mr. Creede's duplicates of those articles. You shudder at the thought. I do not wonder at it; but, for the time being, you must put all your finer feelings into your pocket. But first," added Tom, diving again into his bag, "pull on this pair of old black trousers over your own, after which you can go on with the remainder of your dressing while I finish with Silenus here."

Once more the bag came into requisition, and from it Tom brought orth a light-coloured wig, with which was combined a beard and moustache precisely the same in colour and appearance as those of which Lionel had been so recently despoiled. With these he proceeded to decorate the head and face of the unconscious Creede. It was necessary to do this, because the bed was exactly opposite the cell door, and once or twice in the course of the night, the warder on duty was instructed to open the little wicket, and see that everything was right with his prisoner. As Lionel lay in bed he was in full view of the warder, and it thus became requisite to "make up" Creede into some resemblance of the real prisoner, it not being at all unlikely that the warder might come round and take his usual look within a few minutes of the departure of Tom and Lionel.

When the wig, beard, and moustache had been duly arranged, and the bedclothes pulled close up round Creede's neck, Tom stepped back as far as the door in order to study the general effect. It was highly satisfactory. When the gas was turned down to the minimum point at which it was allowed to burn during the night, no one, without close examination, could have told that the man lying on the bed was other than Lionel Dering.

Satisfied so far, Tom next turned to Lionel, who by this time had duly inducted himself into Creede's garments. Here, also, the general effect was satisfactory. One reason why Tom's choice had fallen on Creede was because he and Lionel were both about the same height and build.

Tom gave a few final artistic touches to the tout ensemble—arranging the frayed old black necktie, and the limp, dirty collar, after Creede's own slovenly fashion—and finishing by putting into Lionel's reluctant hands the law-clerk's greasy and much worn hat.

"Years ago," said Tom, "when I amused myself with private theatricals, I little thought that my talent for 'making up' would ever be

brought into such valuable requisition. You would almost deceive Hoskyns himself it you were to walk into his office, especially by gaslight."

"And you would quite deceive him," said Lionel. "He would take you for his 'double,' and think his time was nearly come."

"There is one thing still to do," said Tom. "Creede's walk is rather a peculiar one. Now watch me, and try whether you can imitate it."

In about three minutes Lionel was tolerably perfect. "You know what kind of a voice Creede has," said Tom. "Should you be accosted by any of the warders as we go out, you must do your best to imitate it. And now I think we are ready for a start."

He crossed over to the bed to take another look at the unconscious Creede. He felt his pulse carefully, and then lifted up one of his eyelids and examined the pupil underneath.

"Let us hope that you have not given him an overdose of the narcotic," said Lionel.

"No fear of that," answered Tom. "Remember that my father was a doctor, and that I have some knowledge of drugs. I have made this man my study for weeks. It my calculations are correct, he will sleep for about three hours, not longer—and won't there be a hullabaloo when he awakes!"

"But assuming that we get safely out of the prison—what then? Where am I to go? How am I to get rid of this cursed disguise?" said Lionel.

"You are to go home to the wife of your bosom. Everything has been thought of—everything provided for your safety. And now for the attempt. Don't forget that you are Jabez Creede. Take the bag and follow me at a respectful distance. Pull your hat over your brows, and turn up the collar of your overcoat, and, above all things, don't seem to be in a hurry." Tom gave a final glance round the cell to see that everything was in order, turned the gas partially down, and then tapped at the door. A warder came in answer to the summons, and unlocked the door. Tom and Lionel stepped out into the corridor. The warder gave a glance into the cell, and saw, as he thought, his prisoner lying on his pallet with his face turned to the wall, as he had seen him lying many a time before.

"Tired out, poor fellow," whispered Tom in the warder's ear as the latter proceeded to relock the door. "But I've brought him good news, and I warrant he'll sleep as sound as a top to-night."

"Anyhow he'll know his fate by this time to-morrow," said the warder.

They followed the man along the corridor and through two or three passages, till they reached the outer courtyard. Here they were joined by two other warders. Tom, all this time, had been talking volubly, and making ample use of his big pocket-handkerchief—doing his best, in fact,

to keep his companion from being over-much noticed. But now had come the most dangerous moment of all. They were all crowded together close to the outer gate, waiting for it to be unfastened—the three warders, Tom, and Lionel—under the light of a flaring gas-lamp. The slightest hesitation—the least want of presence of mind—might have been fatal to everything.

Happily, Tom was equal to the occasion. While waiting for the bolts to be withdrawn, his thumb and finger slid into his waistcoat pocket, and the quick ears of the warders caught the pleasant chink of gold.

"Mr. Dering," said Tom, "would insist on my presenting you gentlemen with ten sovereigns to divide amongst you, as a slight token of his appreciation of your unvarying kindness. Here's the money; and I hope you won't forget to drink Mr. Dering's health before you are many hours older."

He pressed the gold into the hands of the nearest warder. The men's thoughts at once became occupied with the consideration of a fair and equal division of the gift. A moment later the door stood wide open. Tom, followed by Lionel, passed slowly out. "We hope you will convey our thanks to Mr. Dering," said the head warder, "and we are greatly obliged to you, sir. We are not allowed to receive presents of any kind, but in this case——"

"Which is an exceptional one," said Tom, "you won't refuse."

"If we were sure," said the warder in a low voice, "that it would never come to the governor's ears——"

"You may take my word that it never will. You can trust me, of course; and, in business matters, Creede here is as silent as the grave."

"In that case——"

"You will act like men of sense and keep the money. Good night."

"Good night, sir, and many thanks to you. Good night both."

Thank Heaven! at last the terrible door was shut behind them.

Ten minutes later a black shadow crept silently up to the door of Alder Cottage. Front and back the little house was all in darkness; but the door was ajar, and close behind it knelt—she had stood there till she could stand no longer—Edith, listening—listening with beating heart and straining nerves—with every sense on the alert. The black shadow touched the door. The door yielded to the touch. Another black shadow started up from the ground. Husband and wife met heart to heart. Lionel Dering was saved.

*(To be continued.)*

# ALESSANDRO STRADELLA.

*From the German of* ELISE POLKO.

IN Naples, the gayest, most magnificent city of Italy, on the Riviera di Chiagi, where palace crowds upon palace, lay, almost at the end of the street, the princely dwelling of the Marchese Luigi. From its flat roof one could look far over the city and its churches, over laughing gardens and broad, cool courts, out on the blue waters of the gulf. Behind the palace stretched the shady garden, full of stony grottoes and fragrant groves, filled with marble statues, noble copies of the antique.

Adjoining the low back wall of the garden was a little yard belonging to a one-story house which was situated in a narrow, gloomy street. It was seldom that any one strayed to this part of the premises; it bore, therefore, visible traces of neglect, and the wall was much crumbled and damaged in several places. In the centre of the yard stood a pomegranate tree, which year after year was laden down with the most luxuriant blossoms, whilst, singularly enough, the pomegranate tree of the Marchese only now and then bore a few scanty buds.

In the little cottage back of the garden dwelt the widow Giovanna Stradella, with her son of twelve years. In the palace, the sickly Marchese, with his little daughter Beatrice of ten years of age. Since the death of his wife, he had loved nothing in the whole world but this child, and had cherished and watched over her as his most precious treasure. To deny the little one a single request was an impossibility to him, and he was glad she did not wish the sun and moon from the sky for playthings, because then he surely would have been driven to despair over the difficulty of procuring the said objects. Now one day in playing hide and seek, the little one chanced upon the crumbled wall where the blooming pomegranate tree looked over in its full glory; then with loud cries of joy at the unaccustomed sight, she ran to her ather and begged for the tree. The Marchese could do nothing more speedily than despatch a servant to the house of the widow, to ask her at what price she would sell it. The answer was short, but took both father and daughter by surprise. Giovanna Stradella sent word that the tree was for sale at no price, because it had been very dear to her deceased husband. The little Beatrice was highly incensed, and could not cease to wonder at this reply, for her nurse had always told her that the rich could have everything that was beautiful in the world, because they had money to purchase it. Nevertheless she daily strayed to the wall as long as the blossoms continued to shine forth from the delicate

foliage. One day she made her nurse lift her upon the low wall, and sat there sad and sorrowful, the heavy eyes bent upon the magic tree, feeling very curious all the time to catch a glimpse of that woman who called something her property which wealth could not buy. Suddenly she heard the silvery tones of a boy's voice, singing a familiar song, one which her mother had often sung beside her cradle. It was a mournful lay about a star who had loved the sun so dearly, that, in spite of the warning of his brothers, he had waited for her* to arise, and then had to die at the first smile of the much longed-for beloved one. Little Beatrice held her breath as she listened, the rosy lips parted, the hands clasped tightly, and the tears fell from her eyes.

"That is the song my mother used to sing, dost hear, Ritta?" she whispered. And Ritta nodded and looked about for the singer; but the little maiden discovered him first; he sat beneath the pomegranate tree, and was a tall, slender boy. He now came forward, and gazed with surprise at the little stranger and her companion. Beatrice, however, called out imperiously to him—"Now sing a merry song; you have made me sad!"

Then the chesnut-haired boy came closer, threw at her a sullen look, and replied—"You are no queen, whose right it is to command singers! If my songs do not please you, you must not listen to them."

"I will not listen to them then," rejoined Beatrice, just as defiantly, as she sprang down from the wall into her own garden. But alas! with a cry of pain she fell over; the poor little girl had sprained her right foot. In a trice some one from the next yard sprang upon the wall and down again at her side, gently supporting her; she recognized the young singer.

"It is my fault you have fallen," he said, much moved, "for I angered you. Only forgive me, and I will sing for you the merriest song I know!"

The little Beatrice did not say I forgive you, but she looked at him from the corners of her eyes, and smiled ever so little in spite of her pain; then she leaned upon his arm to make the attempt to walk home. At the first step Beatrice screamed out, and the boy threw his arms round her, lifted her carefully from the ground, and carried her cautiously towards the palace. When she saw him about to pass on to the servants' entrance hall, the little maiden cried, "Oh, please carry me into my father's room, he must see you. Hush, Ritta, it's all my ault, and I'll tell him so."

At the first sight of his darling, the Marchese was much alarmed, and cast wrathful glances at the trembling maid; after he had heard a somewhat modified account from the little one, he held out his hand to the boy in token of gratitude.

"He may come again and sing to me until I get well, mayn't he?"

* In German die Sonne (the sun) is feminine.

begged Beatrice. The Marchese looked at the boy; he was so beautiful that he might have been a nobleman's son.

"What is your name?" he asked gently.

"Alessandro Stradella," was the fearless reply.

"Come as often as you can, and cheer up my child," said the Marchese, and then Alessandro went away.

Every day as long as the little one was condemned to sit in her chair, the beautiful boy came and prattled with her; told her about his mother; about his dead father who played the violin so beautifully that the people in the streets would crowd around the window to hear him, and how his father had taught him to play the violin. He spoke about the pomegranate tree, too; told how dearly his father had loved it, and how they had laid one of its blossoms upon his bosom when he died. Beatrice listened attentively, then showed him her precious playthings; the picture of her dead mother, and of the little brother who had gone to heaven; her bird in the gilt cage, and a thousand other pretty things, that Alessandro had never dreamed of before. But he only wondered at these things, he did not covet them. "My violin is a hundred times more beautiful than anything you have," he often said. He brought it with him one day, and she looked wonderingly at the oddly formed brown case.

"How ugly the thing is!" she said, depreciatingly. However, when he placed the instrument under his chin, drew the bow and played a melody, she grew quite pale, and when he finished she sighed deeply. "Don't bring that thing again," she murmured. "I cannot bear it." On the other hand she grew radiant with happiness when he sang a song and accompanied himself upon the mandoline. A sweeter voice than Alessandro's was nowhere to be found. The boy always laughed when he saw her emotion. He told her, too, that he was to be a singer, and go out into the wide world; that already he had commenced attending the music school of Santa Maria di Loretto, and would not be able to come and see her any more after the next week.

"Why will you not come any more?" asked Beatrice.

"Because I shall have lessons, and must study."

"But it is much nicer to talk and play than to study."

"Not for me."

"I want to learn to sing, too," she cried, passionately.

"Have you a good voice?"

She looked at him haughtily, and said, "What you have I will have too. I choose to sing, and the voice will come."

Then Alessandro drew himself up proudly, and replied, "Do you think that the saints give all to you rich people—to us, the poor, nothing? You dwell in fine houses, wear handsome clothing, and eat costly food from golden vessels; therefore they give us something else; and I tell you I would not change places, or give up this plain white

frock of the boys of Santa Maria di Loretto, and this black girdle, if you were to give me the richest gold-embroidered garments. You are richly endowed—so am I—but each in his own way; the saints are just!"

Then the face of the maiden grew crimson, and she said, authoritatively, "Sing! I will try upon the spot if you have received more than I."

So he sang her a little melody, consisting of five notes, his eyes smiling roguishly the while, and she attempted to sing it after him. But whatever pains she took, however impatiently she stamped the scarcely recovered foot, no pure tones issued from her lips. She tried again and again, until at last quite exhausted, she ceased, exclaiming, "We will wait until I am a few years older."

The injured foot grew well again, and Alessandro must go back to the music school, and was only able to visit his little friend on Sundays and holidays, or in the evening hours. She always received him with the liveliest signs of joy. The Marchese too was pleased to see the boy come, for his child was wonderfully improved since her acquaintance with the young student of Santa Maria di Loretto. She was more cheerful, her great large eyes had lost that longing, melancholy expression which had always cut the father to the heart, as a mute questioning after the lost mother; and she looked out inquiringly into the world. Her cheeks gained colour, and her slow step changed to one of youth and joyousness.

Ritta, too, loved the young Alessandro. "He is so beautiful," she would say; "he is worthy to live in a palace."

One evening Alessandro failed to come at the appointed hour. Beatrice, who awaited him impatiently, finally escaped the careless Ritta, who was gossiping with the servants, and stole into the garden, and as she saw the window of the little cottage faintly illumined, she quickly climbed over the wall, ran across the yard and straight up the steps into a humble apartment, where a tall, grave woman sat at a table stringing cockles.

"Where is he?" she cried, breathlessly.

"At the music school; they have a rehearsal of a Litany to-day, in the Church of St. Franciscus. You are surely Beatrice?"

"You know it, and yet you have never seen me; how is that?"

"Alessandro has, though, and has given me so true a description that I could not but know you. Come here, that I may kiss my son's little friend."

Beatrice approached slowly, earnestly scanning the noble face of the mother of Alessandro. Then she sprang towards her, threw both arms round her neck, and burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"It must be so beautiful to have a mother!" sobbed she.

"Come over often and you shall always find a mother," replied Giovanna Stradella, tenderly.

After that evening she often went over, the beautiful Marchesa, but only Ritta knew about it.

As soon as the Marchese had driven over to the house of the old lady with whom he played cards every day, his little daughter ran out into the garden, sprang over the wall, and took her place at the feet of that homely woman named Giovanna Stradella. She laid her little head in the lap of her motherly friend, chatted and laughed away, or listened to Alessandro's playing and singing. Ah! that was so beautiful! The rich child of the proud Marchese sat here in the dwelling of the poor, on a wooden stool, with laughing eyes and clear brow. Her splendid satin gown, with its embroidered hem, swept the floor; Giovanna's white cat often slept sweetly upon it. With delight the child ate the simple fruits and the little hard corn-cakes that Giovanna made herself; they tasted better to her than the rarest confections handed her at home upon silver plates. And then Alessandro always had so much to tell her about his music lessons, about the strict head master, and his schoolmates, during which he would sit beside her and roll her black soft locks over his fingers. His voice now began to increase wonderfully in power and beauty, and his mother and young friend were not long his only auditors. When he sang the people crowded into the narrow street under his window, and would cry, "Bravo! Bravissimo!" when he ceased, and loudly applaud him. At such times Giovanna Stradella experienced a childlike joy; the maiden, however, would grow pale as death, knit her brows, and close the window. She begged him never to sing, and was much happier and tenderer when once in a while an evening went by without music.

Thus passed many days, weeks, and years. For a long time Beatrice had not climbed over the wall as at first, for Ritta had laid a stone on their side on which she stepped up nicely, and on the other side Alessandro had built a little flight of steps, and always stood there at the appointed hour to give her his hand as she stepped over. In spite of all the safety, however, she would not let go his hand at once: sometimes they would walk hand in hand as far as his mother's little sitting-room, and when she went away they would not part at once, she would seat herself on the stone, he on the edge of the wall, and there they would long prattle away. The trees looked on earnestly, the moon threw around the two children her silver veil, the fountain mingled boldly with their light babbling, and the fragrance of the orange blossoms was wafted to and fro about the unconscious happy ones. Between these two shot up the pomegranate flower of love in richer and still richer colours, but they knew it not.

And so Alessandro grew to be sixteen, Beatrice fourteen years of age, and it was now time for the little one to be sent to an eminent convent, that noble nuns might give her the cultivation at that time considered necessary for a distinguished lady. So soon as the year in

the convent had expired, a music-master would instruct her in the art of playing the lute, and then her education would be deemed complete. The young girl dreaded the convent life, and the last evening before her departure, she sat beside Mother Giovanna and wept bitterly, although Alessandro reminded her how rapidly the past year had flown by, and tried to prove to her that one year was no longer than another. After she had taken leave, and was slowly following her young friend to the steps, she stopped a moment to pluck a pomegranate blossom, which she fastened to her girdle. But Alessandro, who saw it, tore the flower hastily away, and hid it in his bosom.

"What have you done?" he cried in horror. "Mother says whoever at parting breaks off or gives away a pomegranate blossom, brings death either to himself or to the receiver!"

"And you have taken it away. Must you, then, die?" she whispered, not less terrified than he.

"We shall see about that," he laughed, proudly. "Death has no claims upon me, for you did not bestow the flower upon me; I robbed you of it."

His confident look and tone reassured her: and when she stood in her father's garden, and he, after the old habit, lingered on the wall, she begged him with an urgent voice—"Sing me once more the mournful song you were singing when first I saw you. Do you remember?—about the star who loved the sun."

He sang her the song; never had his voice sounded clearer, never had the mournful modulations rung forth with a purer tone. The soft, melancholy music awakened strange pangs in these two young hearts, and when he had finished, both for the first time spread out their arms towards one another. Alessandro sprang down from his airy seat, pressed the maiden to his heart as she threw her arms around his neck, and their lips closed in tender kisses. Then Beatrice tore herself away. Ritta's voice sounded loudly:—"Adieu," they breathed over and over again—and in a few minutes the child sat in her chamber, whilst Ritta plaited her hair for the night.

When later in the evening the Marchese bowed over the couch of his child to impress upon her brow the good-night kiss, her face glowed as with the flush of fever, her breathing, too, was heavy and restless. In spite of Ritta's assurance that the Marchesina had gone to bed well and bright, the doctor was sent for to come at this late hour to the Luigi Palace. He came, too, at once; but when they awakened the sleeper in order that the wise man might snatch her from the clutches of death, she looked up with bright eyes, and laughed wildly at the very idea of being thought sick.

Alessandro sat a long, long while upon the wall and looked down into the dusky shades of the garden, where the white statues glimmered and the cool fountains rustled, and played with the pomegranate blossoms,

of which his mother had said that, broken or received at the moment of parting, it brought certain death.

* * * * *

The residence of the young maiden in the convent was prolonged at the wish of the Marchese. Out of one year grew two; then the father himself went to fetch her away; and she only left her cell to enter the travelling carriage which was to carry her to Rome and then to Venice. Here father and daughter tarried a few months in the house of a widowed and childless sister of the Marchese's; and Beatrice was charmed with the magic "City of Isles."

But a heavy sorrow must meet her here. A short time before the day appointed for their departure for Naples, her father was taken sick and died, and, accompanied by her aunt, she returned to the halls of her ancestors an orphan, much broken down in health, and in a deep melancholy.

It was a mild spring evening in March, when, after a quiet seclusion of four weeks, she walked through the garden for the first time in her mourning garments, and wended her way towards the wall, where now the pomegranate tree nodded towards her its bare branches as though for a greeting. Did so many years lie between now and the time when she mounted that disorderly stone-heap, a happy child? She felt very old, and the play of her childhood lay far behind her like a half-forgotten dream—the sorrow which had fallen upon her had blunted and wearied her. She looked musingly over towards the little cottage. Did Mother Giovanna still live? "But she would not recognize me," thought the maiden; "grief and tears have disfigured me and made me ugly." Sorrowfully she bowed down her head, and leaned her arm on the parapet of the wall. Where was Alessandro now? Suddenly the tones of a violin floated through the air; the notes swelled, a bold passage followed, then again a passionate melody, strange artistic tropes, adventurous runs, and last of all a melting adagio, so lovely, so bewitching, so incomparable, that the listener held her breath. She pressed her lips tightly together. "Oh, he has forgotten me!" she cried, with a bitter laugh. "He has his violin. How he must love it, the ugly brown thing, when he plays it *so*. But now he shall stop. I will not have him play the violin any more!" And in a trice she stood upon the wall, ran down the steps, up the house steps, and burst open the sitting-room door. "I will not hear the violin!" she cried, passionately.

Mother Giovanna, who stood at the table, cried out, as she held the little lamp in the air to light her in—"Holy Virgin! it is the child, the poor Marchesina! But how wondrous fair she has grown!" added the good woman.

Touched by the tender expression of her face, the young girl threw

herself into Giovanna's arms and burst into tears. "I am an orphan," she faltered out.

"That you can never be, cara mia," answered Giovanna, as she pressed the slender form to her heart. "You have yet a mother here, and a brother too—for see here is Alessandro. He has grown tall, hasn't he?"

The youth of now nineteen years came forward and held out his hand to her, looking at her silently, but with an expression of passionate wonderment. Beatrice on her side seemed struck with his appearance too. The beautiful boy had changed into the perfect youth; never had she seen a nobler form, a more faultless face. It was a wondrous evening. In spite of all Mother Giovanna's resistance, Beatrice took her accustomed place on the stool, whilst Alessandro sat opposite her in simple, dark apparel. He leaned his head upon his hand, and never took his eyes from his childhood's companion.

With talking they did not progress very rapidly, though; however much Madame Stradella might question or want to know, the two young creatures only conversed with their eyes. After an hour, Beatrice let Mother Giovanna wait on her to the steps, and did not even give her hand to Alessandro at parting. Then she said very gravely—"Mother Giovanna, this is the last time I can come to you. I shall not be able to enter your house again, but you must come often, very often, to me. It cannot be otherwise. Alessandro and Beatrice are no longer children."

The good woman promised to come, and Beatrice turned to go; but Giovanna, after the manner of women, called her back once more to tell her that her son was on the surest way to become a celebrated man, one who would receive the most brilliant proposals from all sides. He was already a teacher in the music school of Santa Maria di Loretto, and composed too, so that everyone was filled with amazement when he played his own pieces. He had also become a master in lute playing, and the most distinguished ladies in Naples besought him to instruct them in the art of music. This afforded him pleasure, honour, and income. "And yet," she concluded, sighing, "this beautiful life does not satisfy him; he is often sad as a caged bird; he wants to go out into the world, and I will willingly let him go. I would a thousand times rather pine away for yearning after him than that he should die of longing for what is out there."

Beatrice was long silent. At last she raised her head and said softly—"My aunt is seeking a master skilful enough to instruct me in the art of lute playing. Do you think your son has patience enough, and would feel inclined to torment himself with so unapt a pupil as I? If you think so, let him call upon my aunt, for I will have no other teacher than he."

When the young girl was alone this evening, she questioned her

mirror. "Am I really beautiful?" From out the mirror looked a blushing, finely-formed, youthful face, with great dark eyes. She had to confess it, this countenance was beautiful.

The next day, Alessandro Stradella called upon the old Marchesa, and requested the honour of being allowed to instruct her niece in the art of lute-playing. His earnest beauty and distinguished bearing made quite an impression upon the old lady, and she promised to use all her influence in his favour with the wilful little one. Ah! this wilful little one listened with a beating heart in the next room, and could have kissed her aunt's hands for joy.

And now matters progressed as was natural they should. The music was a golden chain which drew the two young hearts closer and closer together, and before the expiration of two months the flame of their love was fully kindled. Beatrice, of course, learned nothing; her little fingers were inflexible, and her otherwise melodious voice had no resonance in song; but she listened so much the more, for Alessandro played and sang nearly the whole hour long, thus enchanting everyone in the palace who had ears to hear. Thus, too, he sang himself deep into the heart of Beatrice; and now it would seem that this love must have terminated in happy possession—but then Alessandro would never have become the renowned Stradella.

To a great life belongs a great sorrow, and the heavenly rose of artisthood and genius has sharper thorns than the earthly rose; none pluck it without receiving bloody wounds.

One evening, the young Marchesa Luigi besought her beautiful master to sing her the song about the Star and the Sun. Accidentally, the two were alone in the room; the setting sun glowed through the crimson curtain which hung before the open door of the balcony; the many exotic plants standing out there opened their cups and exhaled their fragrance. The maiden lay back in her chair, her head leaning upon her hand, and her long locks fell over her white arm. He sat upon a tabouret not far from her, the mandoline in his arms, and began to sing the song she longed to hear. The sweet sounds fell like pearls upon her ear. When the singer had finished the last verse, he threw down his lute, cast himself at the feet of his beloved, and cried—"Have pity upon me, most beautiful of all women! I am the poor star, you are the sun—do you not see that I shall die as he did, since you can never be mine, as the sun could not stoop to the star?"

Then she laughingly raised him up, and her whole happy, loving heart flowed towards him; then she said—"You shall not die, for I am not the sun. Why should I not be yours? I am my own mistress; I love you, and will never love another man than Alessandro Stradella. I give you heart and hand, rank and riches too; in exchange, I only ask one little sacrifice of you. Give me on our wedding day your violin, and promise only to sing for me, for me alone. I love you so

much that I am not willing to share your voice with any other being in the world; and I have been jealous of your violin since the first time you showed it to me. Now speak, will you be the patient captive of so much love?"

She leaned back and looked at him half questioningly, half triumphantly. But a chill of horror rushed over her when she saw him grow paler and paler, and met his fixed gaze. For a long time they uttered no words, but looked mutely into one another's eyes. At last, however, the maiden's heart beat so violently it seemed as though it would burst, but as she opened her lips to speak, he arose, stood before her and said slowly, "Is that your determination, Beatrice?"

"Yes."

"But I can and will be no captive. If you become my wife, you must be the wife of a musician, who works for himself and you, whose joys and sorrows, whose combats and victories you share. Your riches you may give to the poor; I cannot have them; I want only you and my art."

"I gave you the choice between me and your art," she said, passionately moved.

"Beatrice, do not sin so against us both. Place not your love so low. Leave off this cruel jest; be mine—the adored wife of the most blissful singer!"

"You err," she replied, catching her breath, and loosing her hand from his; "I will suffer no rival in the house and heart of my husband. But you will sacrifice your art to me, Alessandro? Look about you! Wealth and luxury surround you; your wife shall be your chief attendant; your mother shall live like a princess; but you must cease to be the singer Stradella, whom every fellow in the streets can hear; you must cease to adore other divinities when you have me: I cannot sing; I hate your violin—I hate your music."

Then he sent forth a hollow cry, pressed his face against her garment, and faltered, "May all the saints in Heaven forgive you and me. You will have it so; we are parted."

Then he rushed from the room.

Scarcely ten years had passed away before all Italy knew the name of Alessandro Stradella, and Mother Giovanna lived to feel the happiness of seeing her son laden down with honour and glory. Seldom is a composer and singer so appreciated during his life as was Stradella. The people would listen to no one else when he was to be heard; they called him not only the first violinist in Italy, but also the first singer, and prophesied for him as composer the greatest future. His beauty acquired for him the surname of "Apollo della Musica," and by-and-by they came to call him this alone, as though they had entirely forgotten his real name. The women all fell in love with him at first

sight; he enjoyed his young life, too, and rejoiced over many a sweet flower that longingly turned its innocent face towards him; but he rejoiced over them after the manner of the butterflies, for days or hours only. The Apollo della Musica, with his wondrously beautiful eyes and magnificent form, with his charming smile and earnest brow, seemed only bound to one lady, and that was St. Cecilia herself.

For about three years, particularly during his residence in Venice, Alessandro Stradella had devoted himself exclusively to composition, and nothing was more delightful than to listen to a madrigal composed and sung by him. He worked with great zeal upon an oratorio, "San Giovanno Batista," and it was permitted his mother to hear the first representation of this noble creation of her son. It was at Rome, in the church of the "Holy Apostles." The beautiful halls were filled with the most distinguished clergy—indeed, it was even said that the Holy Father himself listened behind a grating—and an innumerable multitude of people, of high and low degree. Madame Stradella sat in the centre of the church, in anxious expectation.

Leaning against a pillar near her was a young man attired after the fashion of the Venitian nobility, and closely muffled in a black cloak. His deathly-pale, foreboding face from the first alarmed the good woman. He seemed very restless, too, constantly muttered incomprehensible words between his teeth, and often clutched at his breast, as though overpowered by a feeling of suffocation. A deep pity filled Giovanna's heart, so that finally she turned to him, and said, in a gentle voice, "If any burden lies upon your heart, be it a sorrow or sin, wait patiently awhile—the tones which will come down from above will make your heart free and ease your soul; Alessandro has already played and sung consolation to many."

Then the stranger smiled a ghastly smile, and said, "Waiting will be somewhat hard for me, my good woman: but since you say it will reward one for the trouble, I will quietly keep my place. Afterwards I will deliver my thanks in person to Alessandro Stradella, and as you seem to know him, you can lead me to him."

"Willingly, dear sir."

Just then the first notes streamed forth, the voices were lifted up, a violin sang—the oratorio began. Like the fragrance of fresh roses, the voice of Stradella moved through the solemn halls; like a golden day the splendid work of tones unfolded itself ever clear and clearer to the enraptured auditors, and passed over. As the last notes died away there arose a rushing and roaring—a universal shout of gratitude, unmistakable signs of joy and wonderment. And the rushing and roaring would not be stilled; it increased mightily, and no one stirred from his place: it was as though the auditors could not leave the church without a last benediction of music. Then Stradella arose once more; the instruments were still, the organ played a solemn Riternell, and

the singer gave the most beautiful church aria that ever master wrote. It commences with the cry of supplication of a bruised and contrite soul—

"Se i mici sospiri
Oh, Dio! placassero ——"

Perhaps no mortal voice has ever sung it as he sang it, for it was the darling of his heart—his dearest creation.

Giovanna melted into tears of the highest maternal bliss. She gazed up at the choir in an ecstasy, her hands tightly clasped, and would not have felt the least astonished had she seen her son in the glittering garments of an angel, with shining pinions. A groan at her side made her start. There stood the singular stranger, with his face covered up, like one crushed by sorrow and repentance. "Do you feel better now?" she said, joyously.

Then he drew himself up, and a little, sharp-pointed dagger fell with a ring to the ground. She stooped down and picked it up, saying, gravely, "He, up there, has undoubtedly taken a great sin from your heart by his music. Give me the murderous weapon in token of this hour, and as a pledge that you will not forget what a miracle has been performed on you. And in order that you may understand wherefore the courage came to me to speak thus to you, know that I am the mother of Alessandro Stradella."

Then the stranger seized the speaker's two hands, kissed them as reverently as though his lips were touching the image of a saint, and whispered, "Since you are his mother, you must hear my confession, that I may go forth from here entirely whole. Step behind that pillar with me, that the people may not crowd past us." And when this was done, he continued: "I came hither to murder your son. You shudder. I cannot speak otherwise—you hear the truth. When Alessandro Stradella left Venice, the dearest, most beautiful woman in the world, Hortensia, my affianced, followed him. Look! there she stands on the left side of the church, opposite the choir, leaning on the arm of her old nurse. In spite of the concealing veil I recognise her face, her form. Her eyes are upturned; she seeks *him* who has bewitched her. I have cursed this magic—*now* I comprehend it; it has taken the dagger from out my hands. Through me shall no hair of your son's head be touched. Go, Signora, tell him so: and may all the saints in Heaven be with him. Farewell!"

No words are adequate to depict the rapture with which the mother pressed her son to her heart an hour later, or the emotion with which she related to him the occurrence in the church. She never parted from the Venitian's little dagger, even carrying it with her to the grave, which opened to her before many moons had come and gone. The history of the marvellously beautiful, distinguished young Venitian lady made quite a noise in Rome, particularly through the circumstance

of the charming fugitive returning home with her betrothed shortly after the representation of "San Giovanno Batista."

After the death of his mother, Alessandro Stradella resided alternately in Rome, Florence, and Bologna; only Naples, he never touched upon again. Did he know that the love of his youth, who, shortly after his separation from her, was entitled "the most beautiful maiden of Naples," had, after years of seclusion, bestowed her hand upon an elderly, peculiar Marchese of Genoa, a man known by the name of the Music-hater?

It was in the spring of the year 1678 that the celebrated singer and composer yielded to the repeated entreaties of the city of Genoa, that he should himself conduct his new opera, "Le Forza dell Amor Paterno," at the carnival. The Apollo della Musica was received as a king, the most distinguished citizens contended for the honour of lodging him; the men feared him, the women adored him; fêtes thronged upon fêtes. The people crowded around him in the streets with the cry "Evviva il divine," and besieged his dwelling to hear him sing. He would open his window in the still hour of the night, and sing and play the violin to the poor, to whom the glittering theatre doors were closed. He received an invitation for the evening before the opera, to the house of the richest man in Genoa, the Marchese Memmo. Stradella's friends were astonished at this, and related many strange anecdotes about the old man, whom they called the "music-hater." They said that since his nineteenth year, when he had been jilted by a beautiful singer, he had not heard a single note of music, and that he would flee from every sound in the least degree resembling it. His palace was built in the centre of an immense garden, so that the song of the street musicians and the humming of the children could not reach his ear.

"And his wife?" asked Stradella, half astonished, half amused.

"She is said not to be outdone by him," was the reply, "and is as proud and misanthropic as beautiful. She is seldom seen; only goes to church even during silent mass. She hates music as much as he; why, about a year after she was married, she snatched the instrument from the hands of a poor fiddler who stood begging at the church door, and trampled it under her feet. She afterwards, it is true, threw a valuable trinket into his hat; but nevertheless the poor fiddle was destroyed. The Marchese, her husband, seldom gives a ball, but when he does throw open his saloon, palace and garden resemble the abode of some mighty magician."

The Marchese Memmo had extended his invitations this time to a wide circle. It was, at bottom, a fête of revenge, a humiliation to that "*bold strolling player*" who had dared stir up such a tumult in proud Genoa. He declared to his acquaintances—friends he had none—that

he intended to show the lovesick women of Genoa how unmoved his own wife, the most beautiful of them all, would be by the charms of this "fiddling Apollo," how she alone would have pride and courage enough to repel the bold adventurer who had dared to force his way into the highest circles. Beforehand he rejoiced at the idea of the surprise and indignation his wife, who for some time past had been more intolerant and more violent than ever, would feel at seeing a musician stand before her. She had no suspicion that anyone would dare to invite an "Apollo della Musica" to a fête at her house, and she never would permit it.

The evening of the fête arrived at last. Alessandro Stradella betook himself to the Palazzo Memmo. The darling of the nobility had already seen much splendour and magnificence, he had long been at home in the palaces of the great, and familiar with the brilliance and luxury of their life—yet upon his entrance into the showy apartments of the Marchese he was astounded. A world of fabulous beauty opened before him—he stood a moment as one dazzled; richly adorned ladies and cavaliers swayed to and fro in the enormous rooms which were bright as day. The pictures on the walls were almost entirely covered with the strangest, rarest flowers, which looked down oddly and dreamily with their flower eyes upon the merry throng. Valuable marble statues arose from the grass, vases of precious stone and golden vessels of artistic form were judiciously distributed about, fountains of perfumed water glittered between the flowers, the cupboards groaned beneath the weight of the sumptuous plate and refreshments, which seemed to have been gathered from all parts of the world. The folding-doors stood open into the garden, which was illuminated with globes of diverse colours; marble steps, on which were laid velvet coverings, led down to it, and wave upon wave of fragrance and cool air were wafted into the halls.

The host, a tall figure with the air of a veteran and the eyes of youth, approached the celebrated guest immediately upon his entrance, bade him welcome with a courteous smile, and bowed low in token of acknowledgment when Alessandro requested the honour of being presented to the Marchesa. With a scarcely perceptible arching of the bushy brows he requested the singer to follow him, and walked slowly through the suite of sumptuous apartments. As they moved along—the Marchese attired with more brilliancy than taste, Alessandro Stradella in simple black velvet, his rich chestnut hair falling in curls upon his shoulders, his faultless form proudly erect, advancing like a prince with his victorious eyes flitting over the assembly, and with an enchanting smile returning the greetings showered upon him from all sides—there was no man's heart but Memmo's that did not fear *this rival*, no woman whose glances did not hail with ecstasy the Apollo della Musica. Finally his guide stopped, and from amidst a group of tropical plants and blooming orange trees a lady stepped forth, dressed in a simple

white satin robe, a bouquet of pomegranate blossoms at her bosom, pomegranate blossoms in her dark hair.

"Marchesa, I bring you a far-famed singer and violinist," said Memmo, in his hard, dry voice; "a singular guest in our house."

She raised her eyelids and looked upon the new comer, but she gave him no greeting—she only gazed at him, whilst face and neck grew white as marble; and then she laid her hand upon her heart, with a quiver of pain about the lips. He, too, grew pale as death, took a step backwards, as though awe-struck, then stretched out his hand towards the beloved of his youth, grasped hers which she extended to him as though in a dream, bent over the cold fingers with a kiss, and whispered, in the deepest emotion, "It was your will, Beatrice!"

It often happens that a single word, yes, even a single gesture, will break asunder the bonds which have confined the poor human heart for long years. The Marchesa Memmo breathed heavily, and murmured, "It was my will, you are right; but I have been severely punished for it."

Then she cast a freezing glance at her husband, who at a little distance watched the movements of the two, apparently perfectly calm, and she said, aloud, "You have been so kind as to bring me, in the person of your guest, the dearest playmate of my youth; accept my thanks for it, Marchese. Alessandro Stradella resided close to the Palazzo Luigi in Naples."

Without awaiting a reply, she took the singer's arm and went slowly down the marble steps into the fragrant garden. He walked beside her as one in a dream; the years of separation, the bitterness of the parting hour, disappeared in a sea of blissful sensations; *she* was once more the little capricious Beatrice, *he* her playmate and friend. But the pomegranate blossoms did not glitter as then upon the tree in the little yard, they bloomed now upon the proud bosom of a queenly woman. He begged her softly for a flower; she loosened one from her bouquet and handed it to him.

"That flower at parting did not kill us, after all," said she, with the laugh of a child.

"Not our bodies—but your heart," he replied, mournfully.

"Why, does yours live?" she asked.

"I feel now that it lives, for it loves you! Do you not know that true love can never die?"

"And you? Have you forgotten that true love can awaken the dead? My heart arose from the dead when your eyes met mine, Alessandro, and it will not easily fall asleep again."

They remained together during the entire evening, in spite of the whispering around them, in spite of the smiles and glances of astonishment and derision. Careless of all, they gave themselves up to the exquisite bliss of finding one another again, and—to their love.

It was as though they had a foreboding that death would come upon them on the morrow, and that only one intoxicating night upon earth was awarded them. The usually pale, stern Beatrice now looked fresh and blooming as a rose, or like a young maiden by the side of her betrothed; and the Apollo della Musica had never been more beautiful than upon this night. The breath of melancholy was blown away from his brow, and he sat there beside the only woman he had ever loved, happy as a young god.

The hours rushed by; already weariness, the destroyer of all earthly joys, stalked through the throng of guests, the candles seemed to burn less brightly, the faded flowers and drooping ringlets denoted that the height of the fête was past—when suddenly the Marchesa, with glowing countenance, and looking around her with a contemptuous smile, begged for a song. "Give us just one of your songs, so that this evening may be memorable to us all," said she.

The noise caused by this request was like a storm. Music—song—in the Palace Memmo! Did not the walls tremble? Were not the marble divinities precipitated from their pedestals? Did not the earth open to swallow up the offender who dared make such a request within such precincts? All eyes sought the master of the house. He had disappeared, and now the guests ventured to crowd around the Apollo della Musica, with fresh entreaties. He took his stand upon an estrade opposite the Marchesa; they fetched him a mandoline from the palace of the beautiful Contessa Grimani, which was not far from the Palazzo Memmo, and, after a sweet, simple Ritornell, Alessandro Stradella, with the full magic of his incomparable voice, struck up that song about the star who loved the sun. His eyes were turned towards Beatrice, who answered his glowing gaze with a smile of perfect bliss. She had in this moment forgotten everything—her whole life full of the bitterest grief, her gloomy husband, whom she had followed, once in a moment of despair, into that solitude which then had seemed so alluring: only one thing had she not forgotten—*her love. He* was there, and with him a whole heaven; and these minutes, these hours belonged to them! Who could have thought of the events of the morrow?

The song had died away—she did not ask a second one. Yet a stolen pressure of the hands, yet a few softly breathed words passed between the lovers, then she whispered, "Addio! After the representation of your opera to-morrow, do not forget your promise! I will await your coming at the garden gate." Then they parted—the halls were empty—the Marchesa retired to her chamber without meeting her husband again.

The next morning when she awakened, her maid brought her word that her husband had been compelled to undertake a little journey, that he hoped to be with her again next day, and would then explain to her the mystery of his sudden departure. Beatrice's heart rejoiced;

she drove to mass to return thanks for the happiness of the past evening, and to implore protection for her beloved in all his walks.

In the evening the great theatre at Genoa was crowded as never before. The house beamed rather with the forms of those who filled it than with the candles intended to light it; the new opera of Alessandro Stradella had attracted all the élite of Genoa. In the box of the Marchese Memmo sat a single person—Beatrice. She was dressed in black velvet, and carried a bouquet of pomegranate blossoms in her hand. When the Apollo della Musica appeared, great rejoicings arose. The pale face of the Marchesa brightened. She saw the beloved one radiant with beauty, honoured, adored by the exultant multitude; she heard melodies of charming grace, which gushed from his very soul; an inexpressible rapture overflowed her.

The opera was received with enthusiasm, the applause increased with every scene, and at the finale a storm of joy broke out, which raged through the house as though it would crack the walls. From every box flowers and laurel wreaths were cast upon the stage, the women waved their handkerchiefs, the men cried, "Bravo! Evviva l'Apollo della Musica." And through the open door the people crowded in from the streets, and echoed, "Evviva Alessandro Stradella!"

It was a scene of passionate delight such as can be enacted in Italy alone.

Beatrice's cheeks were flooded with tears of joy. Deeply affected, she leaned forward, and the brilliant bouquet of pomegranate blossoms dropped from her hand and fell at the singer's feet. And of all the flower offerings the hero selected this one, and, pressing it to his heart, bowed low before the box of the Marchesa Memmo.

The next day a frightful rumour ran through the city of Genoa. The celebrated singer and composer of the opera, "La Forza dell Amor Paterno" had been found murdered in the garden of the Marchese Memmo, but a few hours after the most brilliant celebration of his life. The deceased wore a bouquet of pomegranate blossoms on his bosom, and around his mouth still hovered the smile of happiness.

In spite of every investigation, the murderer was undiscovered. But the people almost tore the favourite old servant of the Marchese to pieces because he approached the crowd of mourners with horrible grimaces, and the words, "Why all this disturbance? It is only a great singing bird they have killed here. My master must have peace!"

Not only Genoa—all Italy deplored the loss of Alessandro Stradella. They bore him to rest like a prince. On the day of his interment the unhappy Marchesa retired for ever from the world. She took the veil in the Convent of Santa Anna at Guastalla.

## THE HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

IT is impossible to overlook the fact that novels form a very important item in the reading of the present day. If the literature of the time be taken as an index of the popular taste, the eagerness with which works of fiction are sought after leaves us in little doubt as to the state of public opinion. The novel, indeed, is to the nineteenth century what the drama was to the age of Elizabeth; and Marlow, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson then held the place since taken by such writers as Scott, Bulwer, and Dickens. Everyone reads novels in these days. How many hours of poverty and pain have been cheered and lightened by the delightful pages of such authors as Walter Scott or George Eliot! It is, then, with no feelings of ill-will that the writers of novels ought to be regarded. It is to these talented persons that England is indebted for some of the highest treasures of its literature. Doubtless much worthless and idle trash is poured forth from the press; but if it finds readers for the moment, it soon passes away and is forgotten. There is no reason why the good should be neglected because, like everything else in this world, it is not unmixed with evil. But to turn to the more immediate object of this paper.

The early English prose romances, besides their intrinsic curiosity, afford us most interesting illustrations of the manner and mode of thinking of our ancestors. They were, indeed, the Waverley Novels of the olden time, giving as much delight to our forefathers as the writings of Sir Walter Scott yield to ourselves to-day. One can hardly conceive a more extraordinary fiction than the Life of Virgilius. There is also the famous History of Friar Bacon, containing "the wonderful things that he did in his life, and also the manner of his death. Very pleasant and delightful to be read"—as the title-page quaintly informs us.

It is curious to remark the liberties which have been taken from very early times with the names of some of the great heathen poets. There can be little doubt that the poet of the Augustan era and the necromancer of the dark ages are one and the same person. Similar honours have been conferred also on Horace in the neighbourhood of Palestrina, where he is still regarded as a powerful and benevolent wizard. Strange that the most genial of social bards should meet with such a fate! Perhaps the account of the visit to the Shades, in the sixth book of the Æneid, may have caused Virgil to be honoured in the like manner. The Life of Virgilius, one of the most quaint of these mediæval tales, probably derived its origin from the fictions of the East. The incident of Virgil releasing the fiend from the hole in which he was confined presents a

strong resemblance to the tale of the Fisherman and the Genie in the "Arabian Nights."

In speaking of the historical romance, however, it is not necessary to go quite so far back as these rude fantastic fragments of days long passed away; neither must we dwell long on the comparatively modern effusions of now forgotten literature represented by such names as Mademoiselle de Scuderi and Calprenade.

De Scuderi was born at Hâvre, but came to Paris at an early period of her life, and there resided till her death, in 1701, when she was in the ninety-fourth year of her age. Her books, once so popular, are now quite numbered among the things that were. Their very names even are nearly forgotten. Who at the present time can boast of any knowledge of the "Grand Cyrus"? "Clélie" is the name of another romance by the same prolific writer: it consists of ten volumes octavo of about eight hundred pages each, and was printed at Paris in 1656.

The heroic romance, when verging on its decline, was attacked by genius almost equal to that by which the tales of chivalry had formerly been laughed out of countenance by Cervantes. Molière's "Précieuses Ridicules"—the people were called Précieuses who formed the coterie of the Hôtel Rambouillet—which appeared in 1659, and "Les Héros de Roman, Dialogue," of Boileau, did for the heroic romance what the author of "Don Quixote" had in a previous age accomplished for chivalry. About the year 1670 pedantic learning and abstruse speculations on physics and astronomy were much the fashion with the ladies of Paris. It was at that time that we first encounter the wonderful creature, then so strange, now so common, called une femme savante—in more homely terms, "a blue stocking." After Molière had exposed the affectation and false taste of these absurd persons, the character of une précieuse ceased to be an object of ambition to the ladies of Paris. It cannot, however, be said that they became wiser; for, though no longer reading the romantic pages of "Cyrus" or of "Clélie," they turned to the treatises of Des Cartes and the philosophy of Plato, regarding love as a weakness, and marriage as superfluous.

The extravagance of euphuism, or a symbolical jargon of the same class, predominates in the romances of Calprénade and de Scuderi, of which Sir Walter Scott has given us a specimen in the "Monastery," in the character of Sir Percy Shafton. In the days of Queen Elizabeth the gallant knights of the period, it is true, no longer vowed to heaven, the peacock, and the ladies to perform some feat of extravagant chivalry in which they endangered the lives of others as well as their own; yet still the language of the lovers to their ladies was in the same exalted term which Amadis would have addressed to Oriana before encountering a dragon for her sake. The reign also of Elizabeth being that of a maiden queen, was distinguished by the outward decorum of her courtiers, and especially the affectation of the deepest deference to the sovereign.

We find specimens of this exalted and false sentiment even in the splendid poetry of Spencer; but the fashion did not last long in England.

And yet there was a time when these wearisome and absurd books were great favourites. Rousseau tells us, in his "Confessions," that in his boyhood much time was devoted by him to the perusal of heroic romance. He acknowledges that he and his father used to sit up during the night devouring the adventures of "Oroondates," a novel by Calprenade, till warned by the chirping of the swallows at the window of the approach of day. Accordingly, many incidents of the "Heloise" may be traced in these novels. But the "Heloise" of Rousseau, once so famous, is now as much a dead letter as the rest of these works; nor need we regret the circumstance, for though occasionally we may meet with a fine passage or an eloquent description, still, as a whole, it can be viewed in no other light than that of a most dreary and wearisome performance.

The real historical romance, then, with which at the present day everyone is so familiar is quite a modern creation, at any rate so far as this country is concerned. Sir Walter Scott, Lord Lytton, and James are its most celebrated representatives. In handling the subject, the plan generally adopted by these writers has been to take some period of history, and introduce real persons and events. While the historian would didactically describe the prevailing manners and customs of any particular age or country, the historical novelist strives to place his readers among the scenes themselves. Instead of describing the vices of the day, for instance, he would rather single out some individual and let us see the effects of a licentious state of society as depicted in a living character. How well the career of Lord Dalgarno, in the "Fortunes of Nigel," brings before us the wild and reckless life of a gallant in the reign of James the First; to say nothing of the admirable way in which the character of that learned and uncouth monarch is sketched in the same novel! I would just refer to a short passage where the master of a French ordinary, at that time a newly invented institution in this country, the Chevallier de Beaujeu, gratifies Nigel with a description of the wonderful culinary feats performed by the maître de cuisine to the Maréchal Strozzi, and which quite surpasses any of the accounts of the recent dinners where the consumption of horseflesh has formed part of the entertainment.

This great artist, we are told, maintained his master's table with twelve covers every day during the long and severe blockade of Leithe. Although he had nothing better to place on it than the quarter of a carrion horse now and then, and the grass and weeds that grew on the ramparts, "with one thistle-head and a nettle or two, he could make soupe for twenty guests—an haunch of a little puppy dog made a rôti des plus excellens; but his coup de maître was when the rendition—what you

call the surrender—took place and 'appened ; and then he made out of the hind quarter of one salted horse forty-five couverts ; that the English and Scottish officers and nobility, who had the honour to dine with monseigneur upon the rendition, could not tell what the devil any one of them were made upon at all."

Who cannot recall the delight with which he has read for the first time some of the masterpieces of the great writers of fiction ? It is the liberty to blend the fancies of his own imagination with the real facts and characters of history which gives to the novelist such a wand of enchantment. He can throw entirely into the background the uninteresting details of human events, and concentrate all the light on such passages as are really calculated to produce impressions. It is easy to see what an immense advantage this gives to the writer for the creation of interest and the addition of life to his pictures. The historian is oppressed with the prodigious number of details with which he is encumbered : from all this the historical novelist escapes.

Queen Elizabeth is well drawn in Hume's History, but the Elizabeth of "Kenilworth" is the one which is oftenest present to the mind. If we hear of Richard Cœur de Lion, we immediately conjure up the inimitable picture of the crusading hero in "Ivanhoe" and the "Talisman." Harold would be but an empty name to most but for Bulwer's gorgeous romance. How fine a picture has this same writer left us of the state of society in England during the reign of Edward the Fourth in the "Last of the Barons!" How masterly are the scenes in which he traces the rising of the trading spirit into importance, under the patronage of the merchant king, and paints the gradual decline and fall of the power of the Barons under the type of their order, the great Earl of Warwick ! How tenderly is the captive king, Henry the Sixth, dwelt upon as we see him looking out from his prison-window in the Tower to gaze upon the first beams of the rising sun, or hear him moralizing to his starling and his spaniel over the vanity and emptiness of earthly spendour ! How faithfully also has this accomplished writer revived for us the pictures of classical days, breathing into the dead bones of antiquity the spirit of modern life ! We can fancy the streets of the long buried Pompeii full of active and crowded existence. Under the wand of the magician we are led through the every-day scenes of Roman life in its most varied and luxurious era. We recline with him at the banquet ; we accompany him to the bath—that great delight of ancient life ; we gaze with him at the savage spectacle of the amphitheatre, which many must remember to have seen so wonderfully realised in Gérôme's picture, "Ave Cæsar, morituri te salutant!" We see the crowded galleries rising tier above tier, shaded from the heat of the sun by outstretched awnings ; we hear the applause when some quick stroke of the adversary has laid the brave gladiator in the dust for ever ; we shudder as we behold

the cruel hook thrust into the still quivering flesh, and follow the gory traces in the sand of the arena as another victim is dragged away to make room for others yet to come.

Though the characters are fictitious, yet they are so well drawn that they appear like realities, and not shadows. Each is well defined, possessing an individuality that leaves a distinct impression on the mind. The fair and noble Ione, the graceful and luxurious Sallust, the gloomy Arbaces—type of the dark mysteries of the old religions which were even then giving way to the pure radiance of the Christian faith—and, above all, the gem of the whole story, the simple and ideal Nydia, the poor blind flower-girl, with her touching and mysterious fate—are creations of a genius which must always be remembered with pleasure.

And then, once more to revert to Sir Walter Scott, how impossible is it to hear the name of Louis the Eleventh without thinking of Scott and Victor Hugo's graphic portrait of that crafty and superstitious sovereign. Inspiring terror into the breasts of all who approach him, and himself the slave of the most abject fear, we see him ordering some unhappy victim of his displeasure to be thrown into the lowest depth of a loathsome dungeon, or shut up for years to live a "death in life" in an iron cage, an invention of his own of which his Majesty was very proud; and then, a few moments after, we behold the wretched creature clad in garments which the meanest of his courtiers would have scorned to wear, kneeling before the little leaden images fastened to the rim of his cap, and praying their aid to relieve his conscience of some fresh piece of meditated villainy—so fulfilling the words of Shakespeare that "conscience doth make cowards of us all."

It is needless, however, to multiply instances of the genius of these great masters of the art of fiction. To see how superior they are to the writers of their class in other countries, we have only to compare one of the works referred to above with any similar production of the French school by such authors as Dumas or Victor Hugo. When either of these talented men attempts to describe any historical person or event, the result, though often interspersed with epigrams and wit, usually resembles more a burlesque than anything else in the world. Who could form any idea of English life from such a picture as is given of it in "L'Homme qui Rit"? Of course, when a Frenchman undertakes to write about England, we must expect to find a good many mistakes. Even in his account of the boxing-match (an amusement in which the French imagine the English pass all their leisure) there are the most absurd mistakes, such as considering "a round" to mean an interval of repose. Both the combatants are accompanied to the ground by "Dr. Eleanor Sharp," whose name might give a gleam of hope to the ladies now doing battle for their privileges of employment; but, alas, it is clear from the context that Dr. Eleanor is a *man!*

E. B.

## VERA.

THE train stopped. The conductor shouted, "Holmes' Hill." It was an express train, about to fly on again immediately; and Vera had scarcely time to bid adieu to stiff old Mrs. Murray, and to be helped out by Mr. Murray, who had been her protectors on the journey. A carriage was waiting at a little distance—an old-fashioned affair, that looked like a small caravan.

"Is that Miss Nesbitt's carriage?" Mr. Murray asked of one of the porters.

"Yes, sir."

"Come, then, my dear, there's no time to lose," said the old gentleman, hastening with Vera to the carriage, speaking to the coachman, and giving directions to a porter about the luggage. "Good-bye once more, Miss Vera! I hope we shall hear good reports of your health, and—and of all the rest."

He was gone before Vera could thank him for his good wishes, even had she desired; but she did not. She was too much vexed at that last hesitating clause. She was sure now that her mamma had told him and Mrs. Murray the whole story. This was what had made him roll up his eyes and quote Dr. Watts, and talk vaguely about the horrible sin of disobeying one's pastors and masters.

Well, they were gone, anyway. Now for Aunt Nesbitt. Vera sat in the ancient chariot, and waited while her luggage was fastened on behind. She heard the men swear about one box, and it was finally decided that it should be left, and sent over later by "Robbie Crutch." Her consent was not even asked by Miss Nesbitt's wilful old servant. Vera felt this to be an additional indignity. Perhaps even *he* knew! Perhaps Miss Nesbitt could no more keep anything to herself than mamma.

The carriage drove off. Vera leaned back in her seat, unhappy enough; but just for the moment more sulky than miserable. Her natural guardians were not content with breaking her heart: they must needs make her ridiculous.

Up hill and down; over a passable road, through pretty scenery and cultivated fields, with pleasant woodlands in the foreground, and a long sweep of lofty hills beyond: bonnie hills of the bonnie land. That was what Vera saw as the fat horses trotted leisurely. Many girls in her state of mind would have regretted that the country had not been desolate and bare; but Vera was neither sentimental nor silly. Because she could not have all she wanted in the world, she

felt to be no reason why she should avoid any chance pleasantness which might come in her way.

Thus the carriage drew near Miss Nesbitt's. Vera saw an old-fashioned, red-brick house, with wide-spreading wings, half hidden among fine tall cedars and other trees.

Driving through the avenue, the coachman drew up his horses at the hall steps. Out of the house came a tall, erect, elderly lady, rather a handsome one; with a sufficiently kindly face, had it not been for the satirical expression of the mouth, and the sharp gleam of the grey eyes. Vera had never seen this relative, her mother's aunt, but once, and that was some years before. She looked eagerly at this new jailer, as she mentally called her.

"How do you do, Vera?" said Miss Nesbitt, holding out her hand to welcome the young lady, and speaking with as much matter-of-fact composure as though she had parted with her only yesterday. "Drive round with the luggage, Thomas; it must be taken up the back stairs."

Thomas touched his horses, and they disappeared round the side of the house. Miss Nesbitt turned again to Vera. "Hum!" said she. "Your eyes are not red. I expected you to arrive drowned in tears. Both your sisters did."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, aunt: I seldom indulge in tears," replied Vera, with stately coolness.

There was an amused, rather approving look in the elder woman's eyes, which Vera did not notice.

"You are the third," she continued. "I have had one visit in turn from each of my grand-nieces."

Vera, completely at odds with the world just then, looking upon most people, and especially her aunt, as her natural enemies, felt so irritated by the sarcastic smile on the thin lips, that she could not resist throwing the gauntlet down at once.

"Have you ever had any other prisoners, Aunt Nesbitt?"

"Oh, no," replied the old lady, perfectly unmoved. "Mine is a very private mad-house indeed, reserved exclusively for my affectionate young relatives."

She laughed as she spoke. Vera could not help laughing also.

"Good!" said Aunt Nesbitt. "Make haste with your toilette; luncheon is on the table. I must eat, at all events."

"So must I," said Vera. "I am dreadfully hungry, and the journey was a long one. I will just throw off my hat and cloak here."

Aunt Nesbitt nodded her head as she led the way to the dining-room, ruminating. "This girl is made of different stuff from her sisters," thought she. "Veronica Nesbitt, she reminds me of you in the old, old days."

They sat down to table. The luncheon was excellent, and Vera ate with an excellent appetite, talking occasionally.

"You are not a bit like a heroine," observed Aunt Nesbitt.

"You will find me quite enough of one," said Vera.

"Do you mean that as a threat?" asked her aunt.

"No," said Vera. "I did mean to be disagreeable; but I made up my mind last night that it would be silly. I should punish myself more than you, aunt, so I intend to make the best of my life here that I can."

"It is very dull here."

"I shall not mind that for a while."

"But you are to stay here until you are cured."

Vera smiled slightly.

"I understand. You think you are likely to stay always," said Aunt Nesbitt. "So did Jane when she first came; she stayed three months. So did Josephine; she held out five. Imagine what I must be like."

"I should say it was you who got tired of them," returned Vera. "You found husbands for them both."

"Yes; rich Mr. Musters happened to come this way that year, and he fell in love with Jane. Jane decided that diamonds and riches were worth more than the future love in a cottage she had been dreaming of."

"And Josephine turned to good works and married one of your parsons."

"Yes: and I was more glad of that marriage than the other. I wonder who will carry *you* off?"

"So do I," retorted Vera, incipient defiance in her tone.

"Oh dear!" sighed Aunt Nesbitt. "Here comes Maria," she added, as a middle-aged maid appeared. "Perhaps you would like to go and see your prison-cell. Maria, show Miss Raymond her rooms."

A large, pleasant bedroom and a dressing-room, handsomely furnished in an old-fashioned way, with a lovely look-out from the windows. Maria was in ecstasies at Miss Raymond's praise of the rooms and the place altogether, asked for her keys, and began taking the things out of her trunks. Vera sat down by one of the dressing-room windows, leaned her elbows on the sill, and gazed wistfully out over the grand and charming scene.

Suddenly she felt the half-bitter, half-bewildered composure, which had supported her during the journey and the interview, begin to give way. She closed the door into the bedroom, where Maria was still busy, turned the key softly, and let her hysterical passion of tears have its course. She wept for awhile as if her heart were bursting, careful to restrain the sound of her sobs. Presently a reaction set in.

"There: I think I have cried enough," she said, with an odd little choking sound, meant to be a laugh. "I have been keeping it in for a whole day and night."

A fatality seemed to attend the Raymond family. Before Vera, two sisters had, in turn, been exiled for the same offence which she had committed; a determination to love the wrong man. An unpardonable sin in Mrs. Raymond's creed—their mother.

Vera could remember when the oldest sister, Jane, was sent to Aunt Nesbitt's dwelling. She was thirteen then. Later, Josephine was despatched. As Vera grew up, she vowed that no such destiny should overtake her. The very rapidity with which her sisters had recovered from the dreams and trouble of their first love, and come back home engaged girls, soon to be married, had excited the wonder of Vera: but she thought they must be very sensible. At eighteen Vera came out. Mrs. Raymond delighted in her. Vera was her favourite child: and Vera seemed to care only for riches and the desirable pomps of life: no fear that *she* would be falling in love with the wrong man.

Some wonderful *parti* made his appearance in society, and Mrs. Raymond determined that he should fall a prey to Vera's charms. The girl made a grand success. She was the beauty of the season; had a crowd of admirers always about her. Her witticisms were quoted; her singing and dancing pronounced adorable; her fair-haired beauty was unsurpassed.

She flirted outrageously; but her mother did not mind that: it would only serve to excite the rich Mr. Osborne: he for whom Mrs. Raymond launched into extravagances that she could ill afford. Mr. Osborne struggled against his fate, as eligible men, who have learned to believe themselves hunted by pretty girls and match-making mothers, are wont to do; and then fell a hopeless victim. Mrs. Raymond had no fears; she was sure that when he proposed, Vera would accept him. Mr. Osborne made the mother his confidante. He wished, before addressing Vera, to be certain that she had learned to care for him. The foolish man wanted to be loved by his future wife! Mrs. Raymond acquiesced, and threw them much together.

Alas! A short while, and the horrified Mrs. Raymond discovered that Vera, like her sisters had done, was "making a fool of herself." She had fallen in love with that handsome young fellow, Moore Rivington; a man of good family, and all that, but poor as a church mouse. Falling in love was not the worst of it: they were secretly engaged.

Mrs. Raymond did not fly into a rage; she only talked reason, laughed, and carried Vera off on a round of visits, ending with a sojourn at a fashionable watering-place, where Vera was made a queen of. And she enjoyed her sovereignty so much, that the mother believed Mr. Osborne's victory was to be an easy one.

But her short-lived hopes received a second fall. Mr. Osborne proposed to Vera, and was refused. Some other eligible man proposed also, and he shared the same fate. Mrs. Raymond went nearly out of

her mind; but it was of no avail. Vera did not shrink and moan, as her sisters had done; neither threatened, like them, to go into a ritualistic convent or kill herself.

"I only love Moore Rivington," she said, with a cold composure that her mother called obstinacy. "It would be a sin to marry another man. I will not do it." And Mr. Moore Rivington said the same thing on his own part to Mrs. Raymond.

Vera was impervious to anger, sneers, prayers. She grew pale and thin, but she would not yield. Mr. Osborne she *would not* have: it should be Moore Rivington or nobody.

"You shall go over the border to your Aunt Nesbitt's," cried Mrs. Raymond in despair. "She soon brought Jane and Josephine to their senses, and she shall bring you to yours."

So that was how the exile to Aunt Nesbitt's came about. She was a very rich, whimsical, tyrannical old maid, as Mrs. Raymond had always fully believed. Vera had seen her years before, and had thought her a terrible woman, quite awful for severity. Miss Nesbitt never visited her niece, Mrs. Raymond, and only permitted visits from her at rare intervals. She told her, with the charming frankness common to rich relations, that if she (Mrs. R.) were not the most tremendous fool in the world, she would have been the greatest rogue, for she had not a bit of true honour. Still she sent her money sometimes, and Mrs. Raymond bore her cynicism for the sake of the material aid.

So, now, in the midst of the beautiful September month, Vera was under the old lady's roof; but her reception made her hope that, after all, life would be more endurable than when exposed to her mother's petty persecutions. Aunt Nesbitt looked as determined as a rock, capable of passing sentence on a guilty person, and hanging the criminal with her own hands; but she evidently would attempt no small tyranny, and Vera could bear anything better than nagging. Her mother was an adept at *that*.

Vera did not see her aunt again until dinner-time. She appeared in the dining-room as carefully dressed as if she had expected to meet a dozen people. Miss Nesbitt had also dressed.

The old lady talked cheerfully, as she might to any young lady visitor; and Vera thoroughly enjoyed her quaint stories and sarcastic views of men and women in general.

"Hum!" said the old lady, at last, "I think you must mean mischief, Mademoiselle my niece."

"You said all girls meant it," said Vera.

"Jane went about in a dressing-gown with her hair down her back for a week," pursued the old lady. "She looked very like Juliet. She repeated poetry, and strolled out at night to stare at the moon. The only result was a cold in the head, succeeded by a swollen face."

"Ah. I am too vain to run those risks," said Vera.

"Josephine had hysterics at all kinds of unseasonable hours," continued Aunt Nesbitt. "She lived on green tea without milk; and thought she must poison herself with red ink. Once my maid woke me in the middle of the night, to say that Miss Raymond was standing at the open staircase window, threatening to throw herself down, the housekeeper, in tears, holding her back."

"What did you do?" asked Vera.

"Went upstairs—sent the servants down. 'You shan't stop me, I will die,' shrieked the heroine. 'Die,' said I, 'why not? Good-bye, my love, I hope we shall meet in heaven! Come! why don't you jump?'"

Vera laughed. "What next, aunt?"

"She did not attempt to do it; she fainted instead on the window-seat—or pretended to. I pinched her, and shook her, and slapped her, all to bring her to. Up she got; flew into her room like a lamp-lighter, and locked the door. She never got me out of bed again in the middle of the night, I assure you."

"It is plain that I cannot do anything in the romantic line," observed Vera. "I will not copy either of them: I must think of something original."

The evening passed very well. The pleasant calm was a relief, after all Vera had gone through with her mother. She made tea for Miss Nesbitt, she played the piano at her request, read aloud, and was sent off to bed early.

Vera had told herself she would not weep again for a long time; but she passed a bad night nevertheless. Would they be all too strong for her?

A day or two elapsed. Not another word spoke Miss Nesbitt about the matter that had sent Vera to her care. One morning the letters came in while they were at breakfast. Miss Nesbitt looked to see if the girl seemed disappointed because there were none for her.

"Vera," said she, "few women can keep a promise. Can you?"

A strange smile flitted over Vera's lips. Aunt Nesbitt understood that it meant, "I have made one promise I mean to keep."

Miss Nesbitt considered a little. Was this just girlish obstinacy, or was it a woman's firm resolve?

"Vera," she continued, "I hate to be bored by watching and spying. Will you engage neither to receive letters from nor to send any to that nice young man of yours, who has caused all this trouble?"

"I had to promise that I would not write to let him know where I am, and I must perforce keep the promise," answered Vera with flashing eyes and quivering lips. "I have some honour within me, Aunt Nesbitt."

"Should he find out where you are, and come here, will you promise not to hold any stolen interview?"

"I would see him, if I could," replied Vera, quietly. "But you need not be afraid. He has gone to India."

"Gone to India?"

"When the explosion came, he said it was the only thing left for him to do. Somebody undertook to get him a berth there."

"Ah, yes!" cried Aunt Nesbitt. "The old story! He is to make a fortune, and come back. Let me see—you may expect to meet him when you are about forty-two."

"I can wait," said Vera.

"Though it is more probable you will hear of his return in a year and a half, with an heiress for a wife," added Miss Nesbitt, opening her letters.

"Did any man ever treat *you* so?" demanded Vera, too angry to think what might be the consequences of arousing the old lady's anger.

Miss Nesbitt laid down her letter, leaned her hands on the table, and looked her niece through and through with her steely grey eyes.

"Yes," she answered, slowly; "a man did treat me so. Exactly in that way. Are you satisfied now? Will you admit that I have some right to doubt young men—young women, too?"

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed the impulsive girl. "Indeed, indeed, I am sorry!"

"There's no harm done," said Miss Nesbitt, in an odd tone. "Vera, you are the only human being that ever heard my secret. I don't know why I answered you. I ought to have boxed your ears."

"I wish you would—I deserve it," cried Vera.

"I never box anybody's ears, unless they tread on Seraph's tail," said Aunt Nesbitt, stroking the head of a beautiful Angora cat, that sat on a chair by her side. "But I am sixty-two—women don't have feelings at that age. It is only pretty Juliets of eighteen who can indulge in such luxuries."

Vera could not decide at that moment whether she liked or detested Aunt Nesbitt; at all events, she was suddenly interested in her. She wished she dared ask questions about the long-lost romance; which Vera felt held a profound tragedy under it.

"I was very rude," she said. "I have grown irritable. I—I have had a good deal to make me so."

Miss Nesbitt quite believed that; knowing well Mrs. Raymond's talents in the science of nagging.

"We will not quarrel while you stay, Vera," was all her answer.

"How long will you keep me?" asked Vera.

Miss Nesbitt shrugged her shoulders, and the old provoking, ironical expression crossed her face.

"Until you are cured, were the orders of your mother. But I have neither a Mr. Musters nor any other desirable gentleman on hand at present."

"On the contrary," said her visitor, with a pleasant laugh, "I am the most selfish man alive."

"I always wanted to see *him*," replied the old lady, not in the least abashed. "Pray sit down."

"I must tell you my name first, madam. Perhaps when you have heard it you will regret your invitation."

"Dear me, who are you? Mephistopheles, or the—the—— It would not be polite to name him."

"I am Moore Rivington."

"The deuce you are," thought surprised Aunt Nesbitt.

"I have only lately discovered that—that Miss Raymond was here."

"I thought you were safe in India, sir."

"The appointment I expected was delayed. I am really going now: but I could not resist the temptation of coming here first. I wished to see you, madam; and ——"

"You cannot see *her*," again interrupted Miss Nesbitt. "I promised her mother that."

He rose, and began walking excitedly up and down; commencing several sentences, and finishing none.

"Sit down," said the old lady. "You fidget me! Sit down! We will each hear what the other has to say."

Even this was better than Mr. Rivington had expected. He sat down and spent a long hour with her. When he took his leave, he looked happier, though forced to go without seeing Vera.

The next morning Miss Nesbitt handed Vera a note. "Go to your room and read it," she said. "Ask me no questions, for I've nothing to tell."

Vera knew the handwriting. Her hands and heart alike trembled as she opened the note. It was but a few lines of farewell; a promise to be true, and all that. Miss Nesbitt had so far relented as to allow him to write it; but she would not break her promise to Mrs. Raymond, and he had left without seeing Vera.

The letter was something, however. Vera's eyes, as she read it, were blinded by happy tears.

"Yes, I will be true to you, Moore! True for ever."

* * * * *

Two years passed away! Two whole years! Vera remained by choice with Miss Nesbitt. The time sped on slowly, very slowly to Vera; but she never despaired and never doubted. Moore Rivington's name was never mentioned between aunt and niece; but Miss Nesbitt knew that the girl had not changed.

Once they were surprised by a visit from Mrs. Raymond. But she could not get Vera to go back with her—which had no doubt been the object of her unexpected descent.

Within a month of her departure, there came two letters from her, one to Miss Nesbitt, one to Vera, and a local newspaper. In the newspaper was the announcement of Moore Rivington's marriage in India; and the letters confirmed it and gave a few particulars. The young bride was an heiress.

"I hope you will come to your senses now, Vera," wrote, somewhat heartlessly, Mrs. Raymond. "I trust you have some gleam of womanly pride left. Mr. Osborne is still free; he asks after you often. I attempt no persuasion; I know your obstinacy too well."

The letter to Miss Nesbitt pointed out that she was the only person who could influence Vera; and begged her to try to show Vera how wise it would be to take this rich man.

Miss Nesbitt received these letters in the morning. At night she spoke to Vera; and Vera listened, white and cold as a marble image.

"Please to let me alone," was all she said. "Don't be afraid; I shall bear it. I could not have believed it; I can hardly believe it; but I suppose it is true. You lived, Aunt Nesbitt; I shall live. Death is very cruel; it will not come to those who want it."

Before she went to rest, Miss Nesbitt wrote a letter to Moore Rivington—for she knew his address. Her letter was very curt:

"Moore Rivington—I shall expect the money I entrusted you with to be paid back to my bankers without delay. I congratulate you on your marriage, and wish you just the happiness you deserve."

She was not surprised. When she found that Vera proved faithful to her love, she had known, she said now, that the man would fail.

"Fate likes to arrange matters so," she thought. "Truth and falsehood mostly get thrown together. There must always be one heart broken."

A week later Miss Nesbitt went abroad with her grand-niece.

Miss Nesbitt took Vera straight to Italy. I cannot describe to you the six months that followed. Vera had not even the comfort of being ill—there are crises in life where physical pain and weakness become a blessing—no such relief reached Vera. She maintained an utter silence in regard to herself. Even Aunt Nesbitt dared not intrude upon her sorrow. She never looked in the girl's face without a pang at the change. It was not that Vera grew thin, or pale, or ugly. She had never been so beautiful. But, oh! the utter hopelessness, the lack of purpose, the terrible inanition. Aunt Nesbitt read it all. She knew this was a wound which would never heal. Vera might live to have a sort of stony crust grow over her broken heart, but the wound would burn and ache under it. No confidences took place between them. What could be said? Now and then, in the middle of the night, Miss Nesbitt would be roused from sleep by Vera's entrance into the room, and at those moments Miss Nesbitt feared for the girl's mind.

"Tell me again that it is true," she would whisper. "Let me hear you say it, for I cannot believe—I cannot believe."

What passed during these night-watches made no difference in their lives. The interludes were never alluded to after: it would seem that Vera herself did not remember them. Miss Nesbitt felt as if she were living her own awful grief over again, old as she was.

From Rome to Naples, on to Sicily, with a pleasant party which they joined: up by steamer to Genoa; by the Corniche road to Nice. It was June, then; lovely June. They stayed in Florence for awhile; and then went over the St. Gothard into Switzerland.

They had been at Interlachen just a week when a telegram from London was delivered to Miss Nesbitt. "Moore Rivington to Miss Nesbitt. — Come to me. They think I am dying." That was all. Save an appended address—a house in some terrace near Hyde Park.

Mr. Rivington might have behaved ill: indeed it was to be hoped some punishment had overtaken him; but Miss Nesbitt was not one to neglect the call of the dying.

"You have some bad news!" cried Vera, as her aunt approached her with the telegram. "Do not hesitate to tell me, aunt. You know now that I can bear anything." And Miss Nesbitt put the telegram into her hands.

"I dreamed last night that he had come," muttered Vera. "I dreamed he had come."

Some blessed vision, it had been, in which he came to claim her; to prove that he had been always faithful! Aunt Nesbitt knew of such dreams; she knew also what the awakening was. What we live through, we men and women!

Vera was past tears. She looked like a ghost; but she could think and act. "We can go to-night," she said. "We can go to-night."

She worked constantly—did half the packing, in spite of Maria's expostulations. At six o'clock they were speeding away.

It was like a horrible nightmare, that journey, to Aunt Nesbitt. What must it have been to Vera? On—on—Strasburg—Paris—down to Calais as fast as steam could carry them.

They had crossed the Channel, and were whirling away towards London. They spoke little; sometimes Aunt Nesbitt held Vera's hand or stroked back her hair, but what words were possible?

"We will go to the Westminster Hotel," Miss Nesbitt said, when the train drew up in Charing Cross Station, and Thomas came round to open the door.

Vera touched her. "No, aunt, no! To him first. Even now we may be too late."

"I am afraid. You are so tired ——"

"To him first," repeated Vera.

"Get a cab for me," Miss Nesbitt said to Thomas. "You and Maria will go to the hotel with the luggage."

Away they drove in the direction given—the house in the terrace near Hyde Park. It was a beautiful morning: Nature looked as cruel as she ever does when we suffer. The carriage stopped at last.

"You must wait here while I go in," Aunt Nesbitt said. "I must see—we can't tell; you might be sent back; she may be here."

"Oh, aunt, let me, let me see him!" implored Vera. "It will be our last meeting on earth." But she sat still in the carriage while her aunt went in.

"Mr. Rivington is better, ma'am," the landlady said, who met her in the hall as the servant opened the door. "Miss Nesbitt, I think? You are expected."

"Is—is—— Who is with him?" asked Miss Nesbitt.

"Only the nurse."

"Where is his wife—that she's not with him?"

"His wife! Dear ma'am! Mr. Rivington has no wife. He is not married."

Aunt Nesbitt walked into the sick-room, nodding her head in self-communing. A word with the patient, and she returned to bring Vera.

"It was all a lie, my dear," she said; "we have been worrying ourselves for naught. I thought when I volunteered to help him with that money that I could not be mistaken in him. He is very ill, but he is not married: never has been. And I'd lay my life that the report was concocted by your worthy mother."

They went to the shaded room. On the bed lay a pale, wasted form; his feeble arm stretched out in welcome.

"Vera, Vera!"

Vera knelt down and laid her head upon his bosom. The arms fell; not clasping her, and she looked up. He had fainted. But Vera's ever-haunting dream was realized: Moore had come back to her.

It was that curt letter of Miss Nesbitt's that had brought him home. He was prospering in India beyond his most sanguine expectations; but when that letter came, he sailed for home as soon as his business affairs allowed him, and was taken ill en route.

Miss Nesbitt had him moved to her own home, and she nursed him back to health, Vera helping. Miss Nesbitt gave more substantial help than that: she settled a good income on Vera. And the wedding took place: Mrs. Raymond having the grace not to oppose it.

"I don't like to part with her, Moore," said Miss Nesbitt, "but what must be, must be. And when the large fortune you talk of is made, out there; mind and don't be above a year or two over it; you must both come home again and live near me."

"Yes, dear Aunt Nesbitt, we will," said Moore. "It is a bargain."

## POLLY.

THERE are many mysteries in the world. Perhaps nothing is more strange, however, than the large amount of happiness to be found existing often amongst persons living in abject penury, and even in degradation.

It is probable that nowhere could two happier children be discovered than were Julie and Polly Grimes, the daughters of a dishonest, consumptive rag and bone collector. They were themselves walking advertisements of their father's trade. The meagre fare upon which they existed gave them gaunt figures and sharp, eager faces; while their dress was of that description with which a farmer clothes a scarecrow for his newly planted cornfield. Nevertheless their laughter was gay and incessant, and life was to them one continual frolic. They loved their father, and were too well used to his state of health, too young and ignorant, to be alarmed at it. They were sufficient companions to each other. They enjoyed a continual change of scene.

Even that delight of childish hearts, a pet, was not wanting to these children. They had Jack, the donkey, in whose welfare they felt all the pleasure of ownership and patronage, his chief food consisting of the bundles of dewy grass they stole for him, in the twilight of early morning and late eve. It was a pity that these predatory excursions were so criminal and unlawful. There was such an exquisite excitement in clambering over fences, in search of the richest, freshest grass, and in lying down, shaking with smothered laughter, under some sheltering hedge or haystack, whenever a footstep was heard approaching. Then there was the ever new pleasure of watching Jack cock his ears, and shake his head, in anticipatory delight at his coming feast, and of obliging him to submit to ecstatic hugs and kisses before he exchanged the joy of expectation for the placid happiness of luxurious munching. Many a day, when the supply of grass fell short, through any accident, the girls curtailed their own scanty meals by sparing a crust or two for their grateful favourite.

Their father had his pet too. This was an old Æolian harp, of which he had for years been the possessor, but which he had originally stolen from the window of a gentleman's house, whither he had been attracted by the wild melody proceeding from such an insignificant-looking oblong box. In all his various journeyings it was the careful stowing away of this, in his dilapidated little cart, that received his most particular attention. He would far rather have lost one of his precious sacks of rags—although for each of these he would receive at the rag-store at least six shillings—than that the slightest injury should befall his

much loved treasure. When hiring his wretched lodgings he always made it a matter of primary importance that the room he took for himself and his little daughters should have a window large enough to admit of his harp being placed in it. This passion of his for music had, at least, the one advantage of securing the entrance of a current of fresh air into his wretched dwelling.

The vagrants had taken up their abode in a certain large city, which was pronounced to be "a very nice place" by the elder girl Julie. This somewhat peculiar title by which she was designated was but the familiar abridgment of the rather romantic name of Juliet, which was hers by right. Julie found herself welcomed and made much of in the city at an institution which she called the "Penny Cake School," as she there daily received a bun and instruction in reading and writing—"all for nothing," as she joyfully explained at home. There was but one drawback to her happiness. By no coaxing or highly coloured description of the delights of her novel experiences could she induce Polly to accompany her to the school. After some weeks she was given a suit of clothes for herself, and, by an artfully pathetic account of how she had a little sister at home who would so like to come and be taught, but who was quite ashamed to appear before the ladies, as she had nothing but rags to wear, she worked upon the feelings of one of her charitable patronesses, and received from her an entire suit for Polly also, on the condition that the two should certainly appear together at the school next morning.

I cannot convey any adequate idea of the joy swelling at the hearts and sparkling in the eyes of the children as they surveyed the comfortable, respectable clothes provided for their use. Nothing was wanting. For the first time in their lives they were to be actually dressed all over, even to the matter of shoes and stockings. In the excitement of that happy moment of supreme good fortune Polly promised faithfully to go to school next day.

Their feminine hearts desired but one thing more, namely some little touch of colour, to make them smart as well as respectable. Their father was away on one of his many tours in search of booty. They had the little room all to themselves. There were two sacks, nearly full of rags, in one corner, and these they now emptied out upon the floor. After much searching they found some little pieces of ribbon and imitation lace, out of which they constructed bows to wear at their necks.

They were up with the sun next day, so as to get early through their morning's work and thus be able to begin their toilettes betimes. The ghost of a smile lit up the pale, grim face of their father when they stood before him fully arrayed. And, indeed, the younger child, at any rate, made a pretty picture for the eye to rest upon. Julie was somewhat like a gipsy, and had a famished, eager look in her dark eyes; but

Polly's eyes were of that celestial blue colour seen only, as a general rule, in the eyes of very young children and of placid wax dolls. Their expression was, however, now the most remarkable thing about the child. She looked at her father with an abstracted, intense gaze, whilst the corners of her sensitive little mouth twitched. The blue veins in her forehead, now pure and white, if it had never been so before, swelled and throbbed as the blood rushed through them. There was on her a shadow of the coming terrors of appearing amongst all the strangers in the school-room. "God bless ye, children," Grimes said, stroking her fair soft hair. As the children could not remember to have ever before heard him use his Creator's name, except to add emphasis to some curse, they were deeply impressed by his solemnity. Before starting they ran out into the little yard to show themselves to Jack. "He don't know us, Julie," gasped Polly, in an ecstasy of delight, throwing herself on her phlegmatic friend's neck, regardless of her finery.

The two at last set out on their walk, but at every step Polly's courage sank lower and lower. She began to lag behind her sister, and finally asked, in a weak little voice, if they were near "it." Julie said they were.

"I has a great pain in my leg," sighed Polly.

"Never mind," replied Julie, catching her by the hand, and drawing her on a few paces. But the child resisted.

"Julie," she cried, solemnly, "I'se got a very bad pain in my other leg now, and I can't walk any more."

"But we are just there now. See, it is only round the next street," argued the elder girl.

"But I feel very bad, and very sick, and I can't go, and I won't," sobbed the child, covering her face with her hands, and standing still.

"But I say 'tis like thieving, if you won't come to the school, when I promised the lady, and got you the clothes," Julie said, indignantly. "And oh, Polly, I'se so lonely without you. Now will you come?"

But Polly would not go. Forgetting the pain in her legs, she ran away towards home as fast as she could, while Julie, in distress, loitered outside the school all day, until, at last, her patroness caught sight of her, and, by kind words, won her tale from her. But it is not of Julie that I have to tell.

Polly never slackened speed until she reached an old bridge which was distant but some hundred yards or so from the back street in which her father lodged. Here she paused to take breath and to look about her. It was a lovely autumn morning, and the river gleamed in the sunshine and rippled beneath the breeze. The little girl shook off her terrors and low spirits on the instant, and loitered about, watching a group of children at play, feeling fully conscious of the unwonted magnificence of her own attire. On a sudden a peal of bells began to ring.

Charles Lamb calls the chiming of bells the "music nighest bordering on heaven." Polly never thought of heaven, as she knew nothing at all about it; but she found the bells exercise on her something of the same sort of influence that the Æolian harp had exercised years before upon her father. She crept along slowly, nearer and nearer to the place from whence the music came, until she found herself before a great iron gate—the gate of the cathedral. It was locked, however, and she could only look through the railings. Inside she saw waving trees, weeping showers of autumnal tears, and green grass heaving up and down, and adorned with white crosses and great tombs. Above all towered the lofty pile. The little girl's wondering, admiring eyes went up until they rested, fascinated, upon a great golden angel with a raised trumpet at its mouth. She felt sure that the lovely chiming came from this glittering, glorious creation, and her heart swelled with a wild longing to get nearer, by any means. When she found it impossible to enter here, she went up the hill, keeping close to the railings, in the hope of finding some other entrance. She saw a gentleman and lady going in by a small gate higher up; but, alas! they locked the door behind them, and she was again disappointed. She still went on, and, at last, gave a little sigh of joy when she came to a second great iron gate. It was open, and beyond it stood an open door, inside which she crept, all unhindered by a tall verger, before whom she shuddered, fearing a reproof for her temerity.

The chiming of the bells had ceased, but what cared she? Some music, still more lovely, was stealing through the great wide church; and, in the distance, she saw a white-robed procession in the act of breaking up and dispersing its members in various directions. She crept round by the baptistry, wondering much at the great font, in which it was almost possible that a child of her size could have been completely submerged. She paused at last, not far from the choir organ, behind the shelter of a friendly massive pillar, her entranced gaze going up from the worshippers into the mighty dome above their heads, as though it were granted to her to see the church invisible joining with the earthly adorers. She knelt, and stood, and sat, as she saw others doing, but no idea presented itself to her mind as to the significance of any of these acts. She was only conscious of an indefinable, blissful, pleasurable peace, and of an aching dread of the coming moment when she must again go out into the every-day world. As she looked at the choristers her little heart began to swell with a new longing. This was that she herself could be a member of such a band; and this desire was hereafter ever present with her. But little of the service reached her ears distinctly, and to that little those ears were sealed; and yet, no doubt, the subtle essence of the beautiful sentences distilled itself into her being.

In half an hour the whole was over; but Polly would have stayed on

within those lovely walls, wrapped in a trance of delight, had not the verger told her it was time for her to leave the church.

"Oh, sir, will it ever be again? May I come back here some other time?" she said wistfully, grasping his hand, her eagerness overcoming her habitual timidity.

He looked at this strange child with an amused smile.

"You may come again at five," he said, "and every day at ten and five, and three times on Sundays, if you will; but I warrant you'll soon be tired of it, my lassie."

Heaving a sigh that was half a sob, Polly ran away. Although she could find no fitting words in which to express her delight at the elysium into which she had found admittance, she succeeded in inducing Julie to go with her that next evening, to share the renewal of her happiness. But this was the only occasion on which the elder girl ever visited the cathedral. The solemn stillness of the place, which constituted its chief charm to Polly, was to her irksome. In time her kind lady-friend induced her, however, to attend the church and Sunday-school which she herself frequented. God was leading the two children by different roads, although the haven He had in view for both was the same.

But from this time Julie used, with truth, to complain that she had lost her sister. Polly henceforth almost lived entirely either inside the cathedral walls or wandering about outside, gazing up at the golden angel, and at the pinnacles and spires, and listening to the music of the chimes. It caused the child an actual physical pain when she was compelled to leave the precincts of the church; and, by degrees, her whole soul became absorbed in the yearning desire she felt to be left, just for once, in sole possession of the building. She had a prayer to make to the great God, and she fancied He would only heed it if she spoke to Him here and all by herself. It was at night that she specially longed to be alone in the church, as she believed that the golden angel came down in the darkness and sheltered himself within these walls, and she ardently desired to make a nearer acquaintance with him. No idea of fear, in connection with the place, ever entered her mind.

With all these great thoughts swelling at her heart, she went about as one in a dream. Her former gay laugh was now never heard. She slept little, and shared her meals with Jack habitually, even when he was otherwise well supplied. Her blue eyes daily grew larger, her cheeks more white and hollow. She would hide, on Sundays, behind the great western door until the organist and organ-blowers had come down the spiral staircase leading from the organ gallery, in the hope that the tall verger, who was always standing about this end of the church, might overlook her presence, and that she could slip aside, and hide while the church was being locked up: but he never did,

and she was thus always compelled to leave the place before he went away.

About this verger and the dean she had the most wonderful fancies. Although there was really no greater similarity between them than is continually to be observed betwixt master and servant—the greatest point of likeness being that both were alike clean shavers !—to her eyes they were almost one and the same man, and she was quite certain that each took it in turn, day by day, to wear a white surplice, and to take part in the beautiful ceremonial, in which her soul delighted ; and her heart throbbed with pity for the grief she conceived each must feel when his alternate day came for acting as verger. This idea of the child's was by no means more far-fetched than are many fancies other children nourish.

Polly got her wish, however, at last, in a strange way. There came some great festival, and when the evening service was over, the choristers all sang that beautiful and inspirating hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers." The excess of delightful and exquisite bliss into which this threw the child was so great that she fell on her knees in a sort of swoon or trance, and was thus left behind, unnoticed, when all the rest of the congregation dispersed. She knelt on, motionless, behind her great sheltering pillar, while the lights were extinguished, and all the doors locked. When she came to herself, and found she was, at last, actually all alone in the beautiful building, she gave a little sob of delight, and crept out into the nave, and instinctively up, nearer and nearer to the altar, where the highest rites of the church are administered, before making her long delayed petition.

At last she fell down on her face and hands in the gloom within the chancel, or rather within the choir, between the stalls, and prayed half aloud, in solemn, earnest tones: "Oh, very great God, I want so much to ask something. Would you please make me grow into a little boy, and let me wear a white gown, and make me able to sing? Oh ! God, if you will do this for me, I will try and be very good, and I won't, oh, indeed I won't, steal any more grass for Jack. But please, very great God, would you make Julie get twice as much, because, if you don't, poor Jack would die."

Here the child's feelings so overpowered her that she burst into an agony of tears. After some little time she sat up, and leaned against the stall at her back, in eager expectation of the arrival of the golden angel. As might be anticipated, she fell fast asleep, and slept on for hours. All of a sudden she awoke. The moon had risen and was looking in at her through an enclosed window, throwing a stream of white, ghostly light across the church. A spasm of terror shot through the little girl's heart, and an overpowering sense of her solitude fell upon her. "Oh, very great God," she cried out, "if the golden angel came in and went away while I was asleep, I am so sorry.

Would you please make him come in again and keep me company, I am so dreadfully lonely."

The great God answered the child's prayer by sending her quietly again into a profound slumber, in which she dreamed that her desire was accomplished. She did not wake again until the church was opened in preparation for the morning's service; when the sexton was, of course, much surprised to find the strange little mortal that he had imprisoned.

Although faint and exhausted from long fasting, Polly did not leave the cathedral until the prayers were over. When she reached her humble little home she found her father had only just returned, after spending hours in vain searching for her, while Julie was in floods of tears at her supposed loss.

"I will have no more of your nonsense from this time out," Grimes said, roughly. "We are leaving the town for good to-morrow."

No one can conceive the feeling of utter desolation and despairing misery that came over Polly when she heard this announcement, and learned that her father's decision was final. To Julie the idea was almost entirely pleasurable: but, to her, the very thought of complete separation from the cathedral was like the rending of soul and body asunder. She would have spent the day in praying to God to avoid the coming calamity, but she did not understand that He would attend to prayers offered in other places as he would to those sent up within His great house, and she was not allowed to escape again to the church even for the evening service.

The little party set out next morning, the precious Æolian harp having been carefully enveloped in an empty sack. They all walked, the father leading the donkey, Julie holding the pale, unwilling Polly tightly by the hand. They were nearly a mile out of the town when the sweet cathedral chimes began to ring. As the first sound of their music fell upon the little girl's ears she wrenched her hand out of her sister's grasp, and ran back towards the city, shrieking, "Oh, father; oh, Julie! I can't bear it. I can't go away." Grimes began to curse and swear, declaring that she might go and be hanged, for aught he cared about her any longer; but after while he turned the donkey's head, and retraced his steps.

The morning service was over when he reached the western gate of the cathedral. Leaving Julie in charge of the little cart, he went in through the gate, which was still open, and thence into the church. The Dean, who had unrobed, was standing in the nave, talking in a low voice to the tall verger. Neither of the two saw the man enter, but Polly, who was in hiding, recognised him the instant he appeared, and rushed wildly to the two, whom she regarded as her only protectors, shrieking, "Oh, sirs, sirs, save me from father. He wants to take me away, and I shall die if he does. Oh, sirs, save me."

The Dean looked at Grimes in amazement, and he, in a few angry words, explained that he was leaving the town and that the child refused to go with him. Of course no one could interfere in the matter, and he dragged her out of the cathedral in a passion of tears.

The verger told how Polly had, for the last two months, almost lived in the cathedral, and the Dean was much interested by what he heard of the child. When he came out by the western door, he found he was to see more of the strange pair. The excess of passion into which Grimes had worked himself had brought on bleeding from his lungs, and he was leaning against a tombstone. Polly stood by, much sobered; but, as she had often seen her father in this state, she imagined he would be all right again when the fit of exhaustion had passed away.

"You can't leave the town to-day, my poor fellow," the Dean said, in pitying tones, and the man assented with a groan. At this moment, as it chanced, a doctor, a friend of the Dean's, drove by the gate. At a beckoning gesture from the clergyman he threw the reins to his servant and came in. He shook his head over the little group, but seemed much interested in the child. He felt her hand, lifted her face, looked into her eyes, and laid his hand upon her forehead. "The man is doomed, of course," he said, turning aside with the Dean; "and I don't think the child will be long in the world after him. She has the same disease in her, and her brain is curiously overwrought. If they had her in France she could see any amount of visions for them. She has materials in her for anything extraordinary."

Grimes gave the address of the little room which he had so lately left, and to which he now proposed returning, and the gentlemen promised to call and see him next day.

The doctor was right in saying that the child had her father's disease in her; but he had no foreboding of the rapid strides with which it was to carry her off. When he called next afternoon he found her in the raging fever of what is called galloping consumption; she was lying upon a heap of straw, tossing restlessly about in wild delirium. The Dean had already been twice that day to the house, and on his second visit had brought a pillow for the poor little maid's head to rest upon, but she pushed it feebly from her again and again, muttering, "Give it to father, give it to father, he wants it most." Grimes was sitting in the window of the small room, his whole soul seemingly engrossed in listening for the wild chords of melody swept out of his harp occasionally by the passing breeze.

"My robe, my robe shall be pure and white," muttered the child, as the doctor took her little hand in his.

"What is she saying?" he asked curiously of the elder girl, who stood by weeping; but, as if in answer, Polly repeated clearly and distinctly:

"My robe, my robe shall be pure and white;
No spot or stain shall it ever bear:
For the streets of the city are golden bright,
And the travellers' feet are all clean there."

"It is a hymn I taught her, sir, that I learned at the school," sobbed Julie.

The Dean called again later in the day. Polly was then sensible, and murmured, with timid uneasiness, that she wanted him so much to do something for her. He knelt down beside her, and asked her to tell him what it was; but she could only get as far with her request as, "When next it is your turn, sir, will you ask ——"

He could not, of course, conceive what she meant by his next turn; but her wistful eagerness, and yet inability to get out her petition, was deeply painful to him to witness. At last Julie interfered.

"I know what she wants, sir; shall I tell him, Polly?"

Polly nodded a feeble assent, turning her entreating eyes back again on the kneeling clergyman's face.

"Oh, sir," said Julie, "she wants you to ask God to make her grow into a little boy, and to give her a white gown to wear, and to make her able to sing. And oh, sir, do you think will He do it for her?"

The Dean did not know well what to say, with those wistful eyes waiting for his answer so eagerly; but a verse of sacred poetry came into his mind on the instant, and half unconsciously he repeated it aloud. Polly's lids drooped, and she seemed to slumber, as the soothing voice ceased uttering the slow, measured lines:

"Thine eyes shall look upon the beauteous King,
Thy feet shall tread upon the promised land;
An angel bright to thee a crown shall bring,
The Lord shall reach thee out a shining hand;
And thou shalt stand beside the Father's throne,
And sing the praises of the Three in One."

When he called next day, the child was again unconscious, but her delirium, no longer that of fever, was of weakness and exhaustion.

The Dean saw that the little maid was quickly passing away, and a sudden thought struck him.

"Have these children ever been baptised?" he asked.

"One of 'em was," Grimes said indifferently—"Julie there. Her mother was alive then; but she died when the young 'un was born, and I didn't see as how it mattered much."

The Dean got a bowl of pure water, and went through part of the baptismal service. When he marked the cross upon the child's forehead she opened her eyes with a smile. "Oh, sir, the golden angel!" she cried, and fell over on her face and hands.

When Julie raised her up there was no longer a soul in the frail little body.

# THE LOST BRIDAL GIFT.

"IT is very nice to be married and settled in a house of one's own!"

So spoke young Mrs. Clinton, the first week she was settled in hers. Her husband, a struggling young lawyer, whose office was in the heart of the quiet country village that had been the home always of both of them, was away at the said office, and the young wife was alone.

Neither of them was over-burthened with this world's goods. But they had resolved to marry and struggle along together, rather than wait apart until they were old and rich. He would strive to steadily make money; she to be economical and saving at home, and so make both ends meet. It might not be amiss if some other young ladies and gentlemen of the present day tried the same.

Tom Clinton took his wife home: and here she was, setting about her duties with a good heart, and intending to become the most active little housewife in the world. Of course she began by superintending the cookery: the young maid seemed good for little but to make beds, and stare at her pretty new mistress.

Such meals! Such dainty little dishes put upon the table, made up after the best receipts in the new cookery-book! Why is it that these said cookery-books tell so little, compared with what they might. They run after this fashion.

"To cook salmon. Boil it till it's done. Serve with lobster-sauce and sliced cucumber."

"Good gracious!" cried poor Mrs. Clinton, "I wonder *how long* it must be boiled; and whether it should be put into cold or hot water!"

Neither maid nor mistress knew. But difficulties are soon surmounted when hearts and hands are willing. Sometimes, though, the young wife caught herself wishing that she and Tom had rather more ready money.

Very active was she: untiring, and full of hope and spirits. All the best of the furniture she dusted herself, and then there was no fear that their pretty ornaments and presents would get broken.

One piece of their rather small stock of furniture was an old bureau, or rather bureau and desk combined, which was filled with small drawers, pigeon-holes, &c. This had belonged to Tom Clinton's grandfather, and was handed down to Tom as an heirloom. Eunice Clinton had looked through it every day since she came home, and yet found something to admire and to wonder over. For she liked those capacious old things of carved oak, which must have been valuable in their day, if old-fashioned now. Tom had shown her two secret receptacles for

papers, placed beneath the small drawers : and one day Eunice found a prize. She had taken out a remote drawer for the purpose of dusting it, when she noticed a small drawer yet behind it. Of course, she opened this at once, and there found, wrapped in a piece of old yellow paper, a silver watch. It was very old and battered, the hands were broken off, and it had no glass. She took it up and shook it, but it did not tick in answer to the shake, as, no doubt, a well-regulated watch ought to do : it only rattled, as though the inside works were all loose and broken. She tried to open it, and got the outer case off without trouble ; but the watch itself resisted all her efforts. It seemed never to have had an opening yet.

How was it Tom had never found this, she wondered. But Tom Clinton had no genius for exploring old places as she had. The probability was, Tom had never looked thoroughly into it since the piece of furniture came to him : and, besides, Tom could never see a thing though it stared him in the face. How she wished Tom had been at home when she found this watch ! it would be so long to wait until dinner-time. How she would plague him ! To be sure, it was no treasure such as she had read of, concealed in just such places—nothing but an old turnip-shaped, silver, or perhaps a pewter, watch.

Eunice quitted the watch and the bureau, and went singing about the house for an hour or so, trying hard not to feel dull ; but the day appeared unusually long. She had no sewing to do—young wives seldom have ; and she wished again that the hours would pass and dinner-time come. Looking from the window, she espied a pedlar with a monstrous pack on his back, coming up the village street.

Now, did you ever know a woman who did not like to deal with a pedlar if they had a sly chance ? At any rate, Mrs. Clinton, so much at a loss what to do with her time that day, did not send him away when he came to the door. Sarah wanted some new coloured aprons, and perhaps he had just the print that would suit. Pedlars in country districts are no uncommon visitors, and are not altogether unknown in superior houses.

The pedlar was allowed to enter the small, neat dining-room : and soon every chair and table it contained was covered with articles from the pack. The more Mrs. Clinton told the man she did not want to see all these things, the more of them he kept spreading out.

Our young housekeeper was sorely tried. She had very little money in the house, and well she knew Tom's purse was low just now. She took two aprons for Sarah, and a neat handkerchief that was cheap ; and no more. The polite pedlar talked and flattered all in vain ; Eunice was firm, she must not think of those pink ribbons, that fine neat chintz. Oh, how she did wish for plenty of money ! She could not bear to see him folding up all those pretty things, "and so cheap too." As the pedlar, with much remonstrance, finally put up the last

of his goods, he took out a small tin case, and, opening it, showed a set of very handsome silver tea-spoons.

The very things she had secretly longed for! The truth was, all their little store of plate was but Birmingham plate, and she had so wished for just a few tea-spoons in silver.

The pedlar saw at once that the spoons had caught her eye, and he handed them to her, saying—"Now, madam, here is the last set of spoons I have, and you shall have them a bargain. Feel their weight—the best of pure silver; and there's a place, you see, for the engraving of your name. Do you fear they are not real? Look at the mark."

Mrs. Clinton did not fear that: she knew silver when she saw it.

"Yes, they are very nice, very tempting: but I have not the money," said poor Eunice, looking longingly at the much coveted spoons.

"What of that?" cried the pedlar, "you can borrow of some one, surely. Or I will take any old silver, or gold, or clothing you may have to spare."

Eunice caught at the words *old silver*, and thought of the watch she had discovered only an hour before. She went to the drawer, and holding it out to him, said, "What will you allow me for this?"

The pedlar took the watch in his hand, and went to the door, as if to examine it better by the light. While Eunice, trembling, she knew not why, gazed at the coveted spoons.

"I cannot give you more than twenty shillings for this," he said, "and it is not worth that."

Eunice felt her heart sink; she had but twelve shillings in the house, and she *must* have the spoons. Tom knew nothing of the watch; and, of course, he would not care what was done with that old battered thing. But the watch and her twelve shillings would not buy the spoons.

"Have you no old clothes?" asked the man.

No, she had no old clothes, she was about to say; when all at once she remembered a pair of heavy winter pantaloons of Tom's, she had seen hanging up. It would be a long time before winter yet; perhaps Tom might never think of them again; she would get them; if the pedlar would only take them, the spoons were hers!

While she went upstairs, the pedlar took another look at the old watch, opened the inner case, and started to his feet; but instantly sat down again when he heard Mrs. Clinton descending. He seemed in such haste to close the bargain now that he scarcely looked at the winter pantaloons. Flinging them over his arm, he placed the case of spoons within the eager, trembling hands of his young customer, took up his pack and departed.

Mrs. Clinton fairly kissed the spoons. Now she could invite friends

to tea, and not feel ashamed when they surreptitiously glanced at the mark on her silver.

Dinner-time came; the table was laid, and she stood at the window, looking for Tom. For the first time the thought came to her mind "Had she done right?" Could she tell Tom? He might not like it about that watch. And would he make a fuss at her dealing with a pedlar? In the old days she remembered her papa had made a fine to-do when his wife had bought a shawl of one.

Perhaps she had better not show the spoons to Tom just yet. How strange it would be to keep anything back from him! Why, what should she talk about? She could not plague him about her being the first to find any treasure in the old bureau. But there he was, coming! They met with the usual embrace: and Mr. Clinton did not observe any change in his wife until dinner was over, and she came in to sit by him: he fancied then that she was very silent.

Eunice was thinking of the spoons. Somehow she did not take so much pleasure in them as at first. She had laid the little case on the shelf in the cupboard. What if Tom should go there for a glass? He had often done so. She left her seat, put water and glasses on the table, and sat down again.

"What is that water for?" asked Mr. Clinton.

"I thought perhaps you might want some."

"And what has my little wife been doing all the morning?"

"Oh, nothing much; just stirring about, and——"

"And what?" said Tom, drawing her nearer to him. "Have you been overhauling the old desk again, finding old deeds and all sorts of treasures?"

"I fear there will never come any treasures to us," said Eunice, almost sobbing.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Tom. "Are you tired, my darling?"

Eunice muttered something about "loneliness." Any excuse to save telling of the pedlar and the watch.

"You are tired and nervous, Eunice. Shall we send for one of your sisters to stay here a week or two?"

Eunice fairly burst into tears. She was finding the secret a heavy one, and yet she dared not confess. What would her husband think of her folly? Those horrid spoons! She wished she had never seen them. And then, to account for her low spirits, she said she had a headache.

They fell into easy conversation. Something led the topic to Tom's family; and he told her, for the first time, a long story of his grandfather, his mother's father, who had once been considered very rich indeed. He was a great traveller, and was seldom at home after the death of his wife, who had left him with two children, a són and a daughter, in the fifth year after their marriage.

"The children were left with an old housekeeper, in a beautiful cottage, surrounded by well-cultivated fields, old trees, and an extensive garden," said Tom, recalling reminiscences as he went on. "The garden was the care of the housekeeper's husband, an old Scotchman, who took much delight in it, and was so fond of symmetry that it was of him the story is told which has since become almost a proverb ——"

"What story?" interrupted Eunice, growing interested in the tale.

"I'll tell you," said Tom. "This old Scotchman had a son about the age of his master's son. One day while the master was at home, the young Scot was impudent, or committed some misdemeanor, when his master seized him by the collar, and locked him in the lodge at the gate. Coming out some hours after, my grandfather was surprised to hear his own son crying out from the lodge on the other side the gate. He was also locked in.

"'What does this mean?' he exclaimed, hastily releasing his son and heir, and turning to the gardener for an explanation.

"'Symmetry, sir, symmetry,' said the stolid Scotchman, 'there is nothing like symmetry!' And the answer was so unexpected that the offence was forgiven."

Eunice laughed.

"But the gardener's boy was a wild youth, and soon led his master's son into all sorts of scrapes," resumed Tom. "The master was absent so much of the time, he forgot that his son was growing up and needed a guardian's care. At the age of fifteen both boys left suddenly in the night, after committing some folly in the neighbouring town, and although search was made, they could not be traced. The honest gardener did not admire the 'symmetry' of the thing so much this time. He grieved over the loss of his boy, gave up work, and died just before the return of his master. My grandfather never got over this blow to his pride; he sent his daughter, my dear mother, off to boarding-school, and shut himself up in the once pleasant home, allowing no one to speak to him but his faithful old friend the housekeeper. His son and the other boy were never heard from. It was thought they were both lost at sea."

"What a sad history!" cried Mrs. Clinton.

"The old man, after secluding himself for some years, again started on his travels. This time it was said he went to Brazil. He did not return until my mother was in her twenty-second year. When he did come he was looking old and careworn, and apparently poor. He never made much of his daughter, but settled his affairs, giving the house, furniture, and grounds to his only child, telling her he had a *small* bridal gift ready for her, provided she should marry to please him. What the gift was she could not learn. He had often spent hours at the old desk—that bureau, my dear, that you are so fond of exploring

—and he often gave orders that it should be the first care of any of the household in case of fire, or other accident. Poor old man! he was found one morning sitting by his favourite desk stiff and stark; he had evidently died in the night, alone and unheard. Of course, my mother was stunned, but she could not be expected to mourn very deeply the loss of such a parent. He ——"

"And what of the small bridal gift, Tom?"

"Nothing. There was not one. The old desk was searched, but nothing of value found. Some old letters, papers, and such-like, were there in plenty; but the promised bridal gift was nowhere to be seen: there or elsewhere.

"My mother married soon afterwards," continued Mr. Clinton, after a pause: "and I was born in the old home. But alas! that dear place is mine no longer. After my father's death it became necessary to sell it for our support, and when I was only fifteen my poor mother died, leaving me nothing but her love and kind precepts and the little that remained of her household furniture, the old bureau-desk among it."

"It is handsome still, Tom, though it is old."

"Very handsome. And now, my dear, I must leave you," he added, "for I have some work to do at the office yet. As to the old bureau, we will still treasure it: for, do you know, I used to fancy there must be some treasure in it, though whence I derived the notion I can't tell. Of course, you'll laugh at that, Eunice!"

He went off, laughing himself. Mrs. Clinton gave a sigh of relief, took out the new spoons, and tried hard to take as much delight in them as she had done in the morning. What good could they ever do her if Tom was not to see them? Even if she should invite company to tea, she would not dare use the spoons! That old watch was surely no treasure, but she heartily wished for it back again. If she could only take it to Tom, and tell him she had found it in the old desk! He certainly had never discovered the watch, or he would have mentioned it to her. But a strange repentance clung to her for what she had done; and for so trifling a matter she really could not tell why it should.

Mrs. Clinton sat back in her chair, and cried harder than she had ever cried before. To think of keeping a secret from Tom: that was what she could not bear; and yet, to tell him of the bargain—that *she* had dealt with a pedlar—had even chaffered off his winter pantaloons!—how Tom would laugh at her, tell her father and sisters, and—and—well, she would never hear the last of it.

Tom came in to tea, full of news, and quite excited about a man who had been taken suddenly ill at the village inn. "I cannot walk out with you as I promised, Eunice," said the young lawyer, "for I have to be at the inn at nine o'clock, to make the old fellow's will. Fancy a pedlar making a will!"

"A pedlar making a will," repeated Eunice, her thoughts running upon *her* pedlar, and feeling somewhat bewildered.

"It's what the landlord said when he came to me at the office. And now I must go. Good-bye, dear."

Mrs. Clinton sat on, in the dusk of the summer's evening. By-and-by a gentleman, whom she slightly knew, came to the house, asked to see her, and addressed her without ceremony.

"Mrs. Clinton, your husband has requested me to call here and ask you to accompany me to the inn. He is engaged there, and could not come for you himself."

Eunice was surprised, but did not hesitate. In another minute, they were walking down the street together. The swinging sign of the Brown Bear was in sight, when it suddenly occurred to the young wife that all this was curious.

Why had Tom sent for her? It was one of Tom's tricks! Some of their friends had come, and were stopping at the Brown Bear! Yes; that must be it.

But she found no friends. She was shown into a parlour, and waited there alone.

Presently Tom came in, looking flurried.

"Eunice," he said, sternly, "was there a pedlar at our house to-day?"

"Ye-es," answered his trembling wife.

"And did you deal with him? What did you give him?"

"Oh, Tom! I have so wanted to tell you!" sobbed Eunice—"but, not here—not now!"

"Yes, *here* and now," returned her husband; "you do not know how much depends on your words."

"Oh, oh!—please Tom, don't look so at me! I only feared you would laugh at me and tease me—and—perhaps not like it. I—I will never do so again."

"Just tell me what you did do," commanded Mr. Clinton.

Eunice, wishing she could sink through the floor, but trying to be brave, now it had come to this, made a clean breast of it—the old watch, pantaloons and all.

Tom stood aghast; then, taking Eunice by the hand, he led her upstairs, to the bedside of the sick man. It was the pedlar of the morning; but alas how changed! A few cases of a sad epidemic, had occurred in the village during the past week; and the pedlar was stricken with it, after eating a very hearty dinner.

The physician who was called in told him he had no chance for life, and the poor man sent at once for Mr. Clinton; asking for him as "the husband of the lady who lived in the white house at the corner." For after his bargain, he had informed himself who the Clintons were.

Tom received the message ; and, like all young lawyers, on the look-out for practice, he responded to it with eagerness : and before the time appointed, appeared at the bedside of the sick man. What was his surprise to hear, between groans and paroxysms of pain, an unintelligible tale of spoons, watch, pantaloons, and his wife.

For a time he could not understand ; and when he did understand, could not believe. His refined young wife dealing with a travelling pedlar ! But the pedlar kept asking to have the lady sent for ; and Tom sent. Now he had heard her story, he awaited the dénouement.

Eunice approached the sick man, trembling. He took something from between the bed and mattress, held it a moment, then placed it in the lady's hand.

"I am dying," he said ; "they tell me I am dying ; and I want you to forgive me, for I cheated you this morning, and the Lord has laid his hand upon me—my sins have found me out. Here is the watch ; take it, and *all that is in it !* I do not know what it is worth, but the spoons would never pay for it. Keep them, and pray for me. Oh, pray for me !" And the poor man rolled in agony.

Mr. Clinton took his wife downstairs, and out into the street, hurrying her along without speaking, until they reached their own gate. "Go in, now, darling," he said, "and I will go for old Dr. Ray ; I have more faith in him ; he may be able to help the man yet." So saying, he hurried away, leaving his wife standing at the gate, clutching the old silver watch in her hand.

She went slowly into the house, lighted the lamp, and once more tried to examine the watch.

"What can there be about this old thing to cause so much grief and remorse to that poor man, I wonder?" she cried, in her bewildered confusion. "I cannot get that dying man out of my thoughts." But the watch would not open. It could not be that. Then the thought struck her that there might have been something valuable in the pockets of those pantaloons. She had not looked before she gave them — and they were still at the Brown Bear. Getting out the case of spoons, she placed them, with the old watch, on the table, and waited for Tom.

She had not long to wait ; he came in, wiping the perspiration from his white forehead, for the evening was warm and he had walked fast. He had left the old doctor with the sick man, and hurried back to his wife, for he longed to have the events of the day and night thoroughly explained. After kissing Eunice, who clung to him like a frightened child, he took up the old battered watch, and said, "Now, dear, show me where in the desk you found this."

Eunice went to the desk, took out the drawer, then the one at the back of it, in which yet remained the old paper wrapper.

Mr. Clinton seized upon this at once, examined it carefully, and then looked up with a suppressed, eager smile.

"Eunice, the long-lost bridal gift is found at last!"

And sure enough, the little yellow paper told it all. A very valuable diamond was concealed in the interior of the battered watch; a diamond that was almost priceless. The son's young wife had found what the poor mother had so long searched for—the splendid bridal gift that the old man had died without bestowing.

"No more struggles, Eunice," said Mr. Clinton, with heartfelt satisfaction; "no more need for my little wife to roast her face over the kitchen fire, or to debar herself innocent pleasures, because they would cost shillings and sixpences."

And Eunice burst into a storm of happy tears, and cried on his arm.

And in time, while Tom went plodding on, making himself into a renowned lawyer, little children played in the pretty garden, and climbed on papa's knee, and begged to hear again and again the pretty story of the lost diamond.

Nor must I fail to tell of the recovery of the poor frightened pedlar. Dr. Ray had him up and about in no time, and his first walk was to the "white house" in the corner, again begging Mrs. Clinton to accept the spoons as a small gift, and as having been the means of making an honest man of him.

There was no cheat in those spoons. They were real silver; and they are still in the family, with the name "Eunice" engraved on each, and they are called "the diamond spoons." The pedlar owned that he suspected something when he shook the old watch and heard a peculiar rattle, and when he caught a glimpse of the sparkling jewel, it dazzled his eyes, and he never waited to look at the pantaloons which were brought out by the young, thoughtless wife to complete the sum required, although he found on looking at them that they alone were well worth the price of the spoons.

"You see, Eunice, how you were robbing me," her husband would say, with grave lips and laughing eyes. "What would your poor husband have done when winter came, and the chilly winds did blow, without any thick trousers to put on?"

# AN ENIGMA.

By Dr. Lyth.

Twin brothers, of one parent born.
We march through life together;
O'er many a brake, at eve and morn,
In fair and stormy weather.
We climb the mountain's rocky steep;
We cross the rapid river,
The crystal Rhone and the Danube deep,
The Don and the Guadalquiver.
We while in many a landscape fair,
We brave the rolling ocean;
We float at times in liquid air,
With a quiet sort of motion.
In every region desert clime,
Where happy lovers wander,
We mark their steps on Alps sublime,
Or where the vales meander.
In every age, in right and wrong,
We have the world supported;
The noble and the vulgar throng,
Yea, mighty kings escorted.
Our sound was heard in Rome and Greece
And in the halls of Pharaoh;
In Memphis and Persepolis,
And by the streams of Marah.
We're long and short, and black and white;
We're sometimes small and pretty;
We're steady in the dreadful fight,
And busy in the city.
We're young and old; we're slow and fast;
We're feeble, strong, decorous;
And strange the scenes through which we've passed,
And stranger lie before us.

---

Merrily, merrily here we go,
The bright red wine is flowing;
Wearily, moodily, steady and slow,
For the rusty wheel is going.
Rapidly, rapidly to and fro,
The weaver's shuttle is flying;
Sulkily, lazily, heel and toe,
The slave his task is plying.
Madlier whirls the mazy dance,
With noise of music and tattle;
Terribly gleams the warrior's glance,
As he spurs his steed to battle.
Gallantly onward, all in a row,
The enemy's ranks are rolling!
Solemn and slow, the friars go,
For the funeral bell is tolling.

---

In many an hour of pomp and pride,
Of tumult, strife, or sorrow,
We've shared our fortune side by side,
Forgetful of the morrow.
We move together, yet alone,
As fancy wills or reason;
Backwards and forwards, up and down,
Both in and out of season.
We bring the news, we bear the dead,
We carry many a burden;
With bitter toil we earn our bread,
And never ask a guerdon.
Contented when our work is done,
To rest without a pillow;
Perchance beneath a burning sun,
Perchance above the billow.
From north and south, from east and west,
Through tempest, fire, and water,
We go to seek our final rest,
With many a patient martyr.
Soon time shall cease, and all things end,
This globe itself shall perish;
But we the gorgeous scene attend;
This certain hope we cherish.
The great archangel then shall stand,
So reads prophetic story,
One foot on sea, and one on land,
But we shall share his glory.

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*** The answer will be found next month at the end of the *Index* to the present volume.

J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE 1, 1874.

# IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MR. DRAYTON'S SUSPICIONS.

THE escape of Lionel Dering from Duxley gaol created an extraordinary sensation throughout the country. Government at once offered a reward of two hundred pounds, which, a week later, was increased to four hundred. The telegraph was set to work in every direction, and at every sea-port in England and on the Continent sharp eyes were made sharper still by the possibility of winning so magnificent a prize. But day passed after day till a fortnight had come and gone, and still there was not the slightest clue to the whereabouts of the missing man; nor the smallest scrap of comfort for the disconsolate soul of Mr. Drayton, the superintendent of the Duxley police.

However positive Jabez Creede, his landlady, and the various prison warders might be that Mr. Hoskyns, and no one but he, was the man who had assisted Lionel Dering to escape, it was easily proved that they were one and all in the wrong. On the evening of the escape Mr. Hoskyns had dined with Mr. Tressil and three or four other members of the bar, and had not parted from them till after midnight. This fact the gentlemen in question all came forward and swore to, and Mr. Hoskyns was at once exculpated from any share in the extraordinary escape of his client. With Jabez Creede it fared somewhat more hardly. Everyone at first was inclined to regard him in the light of an accomplice, and it was not till after he had spent upwards of a week in prison, and had been examined and remanded about a dozen times, that he was able to prove how really innocent he was of any complicity in the heinous crime of which he was accused.

But who, then, was the consummate actor who had so cleverly outwitted, not only drink-soddened Jabez Creede, but the keen-eyed warders of the prison? They who, for weeks past, had been in the habit of seeing the real Hoskyns almost daily, and who, one would have thought, were about the last men in the world to be so easily deceived. Government supplemented its second reward for the capture of the escaped prisoner by offering a hundred and fifty pounds for the capture of the man who had helped him to escape. But government, to all appearance, might as well have never offered to unloosen its purse-strings.

From the moment Lionel Dering and the arch-impostor who aided and abetted him in his nefarious scheme set foot outside the walls of Duxley gaol, they seemed to have vanished into thinnest air. Like creatures of a dream, they had melted utterly away; and not all the ten thousand practised eyes that were on the look out for them here, there, and everywhere could succeed in finding the faintest clue to their hiding-place.

Of the two, as far as his private feelings went, Mr. Drayton would much rather have captured the sham lawyer than the escaped prisoner. He had no ill feeling towards Mr. Dering. Under similar circumstances, who would not have attempted to escape? But towards the sham Hoskyns, who had deceived everybody with such apparent ease, he certainly felt a degree of animus which had kept him in a chronic state of ill-temper both at home and abroad ever since the discovery of the escape, and which would have caused it to fare but ill with the miscreant in question, could Mr. Drayton's heavy hand but once have been laid upon his shoulder.

The celebrated Mr. Whiffins, of Scotland Yard, had, in the first instance, been sent down to investigate the case, and had, so to speak, taken the conduct of it into his own hands. But Mr. Drayton did not believe in Mr. Whiffins—did not believe in his talents as a detective, and secretly resented his interference. But, by-and-by, Mr. Whiffins went back to London, not much wiser than he had left it, and Mr. Drayton was left to pursue his investigations in peace.

Many and profound were the cogitations of the worthy superintendent of police, indulged in the privacy of his own circle, before the following deductions worked themselves out to a logical issue in his mind:—The man who personated Mr. Hoskyns so successfully must evidently have been thoroughly acquainted with the speech, dress, gait, manner, and every minute peculiarity in the appearance and habits of that gentleman, down even to his yellow pocket-handkerchief and his silver snuff-box. He must also have had some knowledge of Jabez Creede, and of the position he held with regard to his employer. He must also have known Mr. Dering, and Mr. Dering must have known him: the supposition, in fact, being that the two men were bosom friends—for who but a staunch

friend would have run the risk of failure in attempting so remarkable an escape? Then, the man, whoever he might be, must also have had some acquaintance with the gaol and with the gaol officials. Had he not mentioned two or three of the warders by name? Then, he must be a man about the same size and build as Mr. Hoskyns, with a thin, clear-cut face, something like that of the old lawyer. Having worked out his problem so far, Mr. Drayton's next care was to look carefully round, and endeavour to "spot" the man in whom the various requirements of the case were most evidently combined.

The result of the cautious inquiries instituted by Mr. Drayton was, that suspicion pointed in one direction, and in one only.

There was only one person to be found to whom the whole of the deductions worked out in the superintendent's mind would clearly apply. That person was Mr. Tom Bristow.

Mr. Bristow was a friend of the prisoner, and had visited him almost daily in gaol. He was well acquainted both with Mr. Hoskyns and Jabez Creede; and, taking the difference of age into account, he was not unlike the old lawyer in personal appearance.

"I think I've nailed you, my fine fellow!" said Mr. Drayton triumphantly to himself one evening, as he shook the ashes out of his pipe and brought his cogitations to an end for the time being.

But it is one thing to suspect a man, and another to have sufficient evidence against him to warrant his arrest. The evidence against Mr. Bristow, such as it was, was entirely presumptive, and even Sir Harry Cripps, the senior magistrate, anxious as he was that the culprit should be brought to light, had yet some doubts as to the advisability of issuing a warrant for the arrest of Tom. Now, as it happened, Sir Harry and Mr. Culpepper were old and intimate friends, and when, in the course of conversation, Mr. Drayton chanced to mention that Mr. Bristow had more than once been up to Pincote to dinner, Sir Harry caught at the idea, and decided to take no further steps in the matter till after he had consulted with his old friend. So he at once dropped the Squire a note, in which he asked him to look in at the Town Hall on a matter of private business when next in Duxley.

Next morning brought the Squire, and the case was at once laid before him. He laughed loud and long at the idea of "young Bristow," whom he knew so well, having had anything to do with so nefarious a transaction. He did not scruple to express in voluble terms his gratification at poor Dering's escape—thereby shocking Sir Harry's susceptibilities as a magistrate not a little—but that Bristow was the disguised conspirator who had assisted him to escape was a thought which found no resting-place in the Squire's mind. "He's too simple—too straightforward, ever to think of such a thing—letting alone the carrying of it out," said Mr. Culpepper. "You don't know

Bristow as well as I do, or you would never connect such an idea with his name."

"Suppose we send for him," said Sir Harry, "and put a few questions to him quietly in this room?"

"With all my heart," said the Squire; "and have your pains for your reward."

So a messenger was sent round to Tom's lodgings with Mr. Culpepper's compliments, and would Mr. Bristow be good enough to step up to the magistrate's private room at the Town Hall for a few minutes?

Tom, who happened to be at home, went back with the messenger without a moment's hesitation; but it would, perhaps, be too much to say that his heart did not misgive him a little as he walked smilingly into the lion's den. Mr. Culpepper shook hands with him, and pointed to a chair next his own. Sir Harry nodded and said, "How do you do, Mr. Bristow?" but looked anxious and flurried. Drayton coughed behind his hand, and quietly changed his position so as to get between Tom and the door. "There's no knowing what may happen," said the superintendent to himself; "he may grow desperate as soon as he finds it's all up with him."

"We have sent for you, Bristow," said the Squire, "that we may have a little talk with you about Mr. Dering's extraordinary escape."

"It was indeed an extraordinary escape, sir," said Tom; "but I am not aware that I am in a position to furnish you with any special information respecting it. The *Duxley Gazette* seems to me ——"

"No—no, that isn't what we mean," interrupted the Squire. "To be plain with you, Bristow, a report has got abroad—no matter how it originated—that you were somehow mixed up in that very queer piece of business."

"In other words, people think that, because I was Mr. Dering's friend, it must be I who assisted him to escape?"

"That's just about it," said the Squire. "You couldn't have put it in plainer language."

"Well, gentlemen, I will tell you candidly that, believing firmly, as I do, in Mr. Dering's innocence, I would gladly have assisted him to escape had it lain in my power to do so. But I think I shall be able to prove to your entire satisfaction that, unless it is possible for a man to be in two places at once, I was in a direction quite the opposite of that of Duxley gaol at the exact time that the escape was being carried into effect."

"There! what did I tell you?" said the Squire triumphantly. "I knew the lad was innocent."

"Mr. Bristow has yet to enlighten us as to his proceedings on the night in question," said Sir Harry stiffly.

"In the first place," said Tom, "if you will kindly send for Mrs.

Potts, my landlady, who is, I believe, a most trustworthy woman, you will find on inquiry of her that, on the night of the escape, the clock had just struck eleven as I reached home. Mrs. Potts will remember the circumstance, because, a minute or two after going indoors, I heard her fastening up the house as usual, and I called over the banisters to ask her the time, my watch having stopped for want of winding up. On hearing my question, Mrs. Potts held up her candle to the face of the old case-clock in the entrance-hall, and called out that it was just five minutes past eleven. Now, if I was in my own lodgings at five minutes past eleven, I could not have had anything to do with the escape of Mr. Dering, who, it was proved in evidence by the warders, did not set foot outside the gates till a quarter of an hour past that time."

"Of course not. The thing's as clear as daylight," said the Squire, heartily.

"Perhaps, Sir Harry, you will kindly send for Mrs. Potts," said Tom. "I should like you to hear the corroboration of my story from her lips while I am here."

"Drayton, send one of your men with my compliments to Mrs. Potts, and ——"

"Beg pardon, Sir Harry," said Drayton, with some confusion, "but I found out two or three days ago, in consequence of certain private inquiries made by me, that what Mr. Bristow says about Mrs. Potts and the clock is quite true. According to that clock, Mr. Bristow, on the night of the escape, was at home at eleven to the minute."

"What on earth do you mean, Drayton?" said Sir Harry, growing very red in the face. "If you knew all this before, why let me send for Mr. Bristow? If what you say is true, there is no case whatever against this gentleman, and I can only apologize to him for having brought him here at all."

Drayton turned very white, but he was a man not easily put down. "Such things have been known," he said, "as clock fingers being put either backward or forward so as to suit people's own convenience."

"Drayton, you are a bigger fool than I took you to be," said Sir Harry, irately, "and I never had a very high opinion of your brains."

Drayton, metaphorically speaking, sank into his boots.

"As it happens," said Tom, "I am in a position to offer you a still stronger confirmation of the impossibility of my having had anything to do with effecting the escape of Mr. Dering."

"We shall be very happy, Mr. Bristow, to listen to anything you have to say," said Sir Harry, politely.

"Then I must ask you, Sir Harry, to kindly answer me one or two questions," said Tom.

"As many as you like, Mr. Bristow."

"Were not you yourself in Duxley till rather a late hour on the night of the escape?"

"I was. I did not leave the White Bear till after ten o'clock."

"Precisely so. You and your son together in your dog-cart. When you reached Deadman's Hollow—you know the place I mean: that deep cutting in the road about two miles out of Duxley, where the trees, planted thick on both sides, nearly meet overhead?"

"I know the place you mean," said Sir Harry.

"When you reached that spot, you did not see a man sitting on a broken bit of wall in the gloomiest part of the road?"

"I certainly did not."

"He had been taking a constitutional by starlight. The night was close and oppressive, and he had sat down, hat in hand, to gather breath before climbing the opposite hill."

"I certainly did not see the person to whom you allude."

"But he saw you, Sir Harry. He saw you come to a dead stop within a dozen yards of where he was sitting. One of the traces had suddenly given way. You got down to ascertain what was the matter, and as you did so, you made use of a rather strong expression. Would you like me, Sir Harry, to repeat the exact words made use of by you on the occasion in question?"

"Not at all, Mr. Bristow, not at all. Not requisite, I assure you," said Sir Harry, hastily.

"You alighted from the dog-cart," resumed Tom. "Your son got down after you, and you gave him one of the side-lamps to hold while you did your best to mend the broken trace. As you got into the trap again, the church clock at Leyland chimed the half hour. 'We shall be very late home, father,' said your son. 'Mamma will have given us up long ago.' What you answered I did not hear, but next moment you were driving away again as hard as you could, as if to make up for lost time. And now, gentlemen, I hope you will agree with me, that it was a sheer impossibility for the man who was a witness of this incident to have been at that very moment in Duxley gaol assisting a prisoner to escape."

"Mr. Bristow, not another word," cried Sir Harry. "I regret exceedingly that you were ever called upon for any such explanation. Mr. Culpepper and I are going to have luncheon in five minutes. Will you do me the favour of joining us?"

"This will be something to tell Jane when I get home," said the Squire with a chuckle. "I believe you are a prime favourite with my Jenny," he added, turning to Tom.

So Tom lunched at the White Bear with Sir Harry and the Squire, and parted from them afterwards on the best of terms.

But Mr. Drayton, although staggered by Tom's statement, was by no means convinced in his own mind of the latter's innocence. "Artful—very," was his muttered comment as he left the room. "But, hang me, if I don't think he's been bamboozling Sir Harry all the way through."

And Mr. Drayton was not far wrong in his supposition.

Tom *had* put the clock at his lodgings half-an-hour back, and had purposely called his landlady's particular attention to the time of his arrival at home, knowing well how such evidence would tell in his favour should worthy Mrs. Potts ever be called upon to give it.

As for the incident of the broken trace, Tom had obtained his knowledge of that quite by accident. As he was taking a country ramble the day after the escape, a sudden thunder-shower drove him for shelter into a little roadside public-house. He sat down and called for some refreshment. While waiting for the rain to abate, his attention was attracted by the conversation of two labouring-men who were sitting on the opposite side of the partition against which he was seated. One of the two men was recounting some incident to his companion, with all that particularity as to time and place, and the actual words overheard, which, not unfrequently, makes the narrations of uneducated persons so thoroughly vivid and life-like. The man, it appeared, was on his way home, and had stopped to rest awhile in the dark part of the road, when Sir Harry's dog-cart drove up. Then came the sudden halt and the after-incidents, exactly as told by Tom at second-hand from the man.

"I'd have gone and lent him a hand," added the man, "if it had been anybody but Sir Harry Cripps. But he gave me three months once because a hare was found in my pocket, which had got there quite accidental, so that if he had broke his neck it wouldn't have broke my heart."

It was the story thus told which Tom had boldly seized upon and appropriated as an experience of his own when before Sir Harry; with what result has been already seen.

It had been a serious question with Tom whether, after the escape of Lionel, he should continue to call at Alder Cottage as he had been in the habit of doing previously, or whether he should absent himself entirely till the first ardour of the hue-and-cry was over, and his friend had been safely smuggled away to some more distant hiding-place. After mature consideration, Tom decided that it would be better in every way that he should keep up his visits as usual—as if, in fact, the escape of Lionel Dering were a matter of no moment either to the inmates of Alder Cottage or to himself. To break off his visits might merely serve to breed suspicion where none existed already; besides which it was absolutely necessary that he should see Lionel occasionally, in ordert hat the means might be concocted and agreed upon for his further escape.

So Tom came and went as usual, and in no wise altered the mode of his daily life. But, after a time, he became conscious that not only he himself, but the inmates of Alder Cottage, had been placed under police surveillance.

Wherever he went his footsteps were dogged—not offensively, but

cautiously, respectfully, and at a distance. The Cottage, too, was, so to speak, surrounded with spies.

This gave Tom some anxiety. It seemed to show that the suspicions of Messrs. Whiffins and Drayton were beginning to concentrate themselves nearer home. And to a certain extent he was right. After slow and painful cogitation, and not till more than three weeks after the escape, Mr. Drayton arrived at the conclusion that it was just possible that Mr. Dering might never have attempted to go abroad at all, or even to get as far as London, but might be snugly hidden somewhere close at hand. But if so—where?

The result of this question was the watching by day and night of Alder Cottage, and of the comings and goings of its inmates.

A week passed away and Mr. Drayton began to despair. His men had absolutely nothing to report, except that the ladies went out occasionally for a short walk; that Martha Vince, the servant, went out every morning to make the needful domestic purchases; and that Mr. Bristow called every other day and was the only visitor at the Cottage.

Mr. Drayton was seriously considering as to the advisability of withdrawing his men, when one of them brought him a piece of information which startled him considerably. This man, Tidey by name, had been on watch in a clump of trees a short distance from the cottage, when, so he averred, he saw a corner of one of the blinds drawn on one side, and a man's face peer out along the road, as if expecting some one. Tidey was positive that it was a man's face. He was equally certain it was not the face of Mr. Bristow, which was well known to him by sight. That it could not be Mr. Bristow was proved in another way, by another man, who had seen that gentleman leave the cottage only two hours previously.

Mr. Drayton decided to strike while the iron was hot. He went at once to Colonel Chumley, one of the magistrates—he would not go to Sir Harry Cripps again, who, indeed, happened not to be sitting that day—and having deposed to his belief that Lionel Dering was at that moment hiding at Alder Cottage, he at once obtained the requisite warrant, authorizing him to search the premises in question.

Half an hour later, followed by four picked men in plain clothes, Mr. Drayton set out for the cottage.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### HIDE AND SEEK.

When Lionel Dering found himself safe inside Alder Cottage, with his wife's arms round his neck, the door locked behind him, and no sounds of pursuit in the distance, he broke down utterly, and, big, strong man though he was, he cried like a child.

For days afterwards he asked nothing more than to lie on the sofa

in his wife's dressing-room, holding her hand in his, letting his eyes rest on her face, and feeling her soothing presence shed over and around him like rain on a desert land.

The bow that had been bent so long was now unstrung; the terrible ordeal was at an end. The rebound was so immense, the change so sudden and wonderful, from the imminent prospect of a disgraceful and horrible death to comparative safety and the loving shelter of his wife's arms, that mind and body were alike re-shaken for a little while: and, for the first forty-eight hours after his escape, Lionel Dering was like a man just beginning to recover from some lingering and painful illness, and had to be waited upon and tended as though he were a veritable invalid.

But joy rarely kills; and basking in the warmth and sunlight of his wife's love, Lionel breathed an atmosphere of happiness beyond what words could tell, which, like ozone to a sick man, gave him back by degrees his health both of mind and body, and endowed him with strength and vigour to fight the stern battle still before him.

Every precaution against a surprise was taken by the inmates of Alder Cottage. All the lower windows had been fitted with screws, so as to render it impossible for them to be opened from the outside, and strong chains had been fixed to all the doors, so that they could be partially opened, and yet no one be able to gain admission without leave. Night and day the chains were kept fastened, and were only let down for a moment at a time to allow of the egress and ingress of one of the inmates, or of their sole visitor, Tom Bristow. The blinds were kept lowered as much as possible; and at nightfall, when the lamps were lighted, shutters and thick curtains effectually precluded any spying from the outside.

The wardrobe brought by Tom from London, as already stated, was fixed in a recess in Edith's dressing-room, and it was this room which Lionel chiefly occupied. Here Tom used to come and see him, and many were the long talks they had together over Lionel's future plans and prospects.

The first step was to get Lionel safely out of England. By the end of the first week after his escape, he began to chafe under the restraints imposed upon him by the necessities of the case. He became possessed by a longing, almost irresistible in its force, to go out of doors—to breathe the free air of heaven beyond the close walls of the cottage, if only for one short hour; and only by the earnest entreaties of his wife and Tom was he persuaded to keep within.

Mr. Drayton's spies had not been set to watch the cottage four-and-twenty hours before Tom knew of it, and it only made him all the more anxious to get Lionel away. But the question of whither he should go was beset with many difficulties. Many plans had been discussed by the two friends, but nothing had been decided upon

when Mr. Drayton and his merry men set out for Alder Cottage, one windy afternoon, armed with the search-warrant issued by Colonel Chumley.

The superintendent's imperative summons at the front door echoed through the little house, blanching the cheeks of the two ladies, and causing Martha Vince to drop the plate she was carrying as though it were red hot. Edith sprang to the window and peered out between the venetians. "They are come—the police!" she said with a gasp. "Don't let them in, Martha, till I tell you that I'm ready."

Then she flew up stairs. Lionel had been dozing over a novel on the sofa; but the summons had aroused him, and Edith found him standing against the door, waiting to hear her news. "What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, darling—the police!" And then her arms went round him as if in their white shelter he could find a protection from every danger.

"Let them come," said Lionel, as he stooped and kissed the upturned yearning face on his shoulder. "It is better so. When once they have searched and found nothing, we shall be left in peace—our suspense will be at an end. Let them come."

"But if ——?" The terror in her eyes said the rest.

"Fear nothing, dearest. I have no fear myself. They will not find me. Be you but calm and resolute, and all will go well."

Again the superintendent's imperative summons sounded through the house.

Husband and wife kissed each other hurriedly; then Lionel disappeared into his hiding-place, and Edith, having made sure that no traces of his presence were visible in the room, glided downstairs, and motioned with her hand for Martha Vince to open the door.

Martha undid the bolts and chains, and flung open the door. Mr. Drayton entered brusquely, followed by two of his men. The remaining two were instructed to wait outside and see that no one quitted the premises without leave.

"Do you always keep your visitors waiting as long as you have kept me?" asked Mr. Drayton roughly, as he advanced into the passage.

Edith came forward out of the parlour, her embroidery in her hands. "Before answering your question, sir," she said, "you will perhaps allow me to ask what your business here may be, or by what right you walk into my house without first obtaining permission to do so?"

"By the right, ma'am, which the law has placed in my hands." He spoke with more politeness this time, raising his hat as he did so. This was no servant whom he could bully and frighten at will, but a lady, as anyone could see at the first glance, and one beneath whose calmly cold

and slightly contemptuous scrutiny his own eyes fell abashed and self-confused.

"I fail to apprehend your meaning, sir."

"I am the unfortunate bearer of a warrant authorising me to search the premises known as Alder Cottage."

"A warrant to search my house! Do you suspect us of being smugglers?—or what?"

"It is considered by those in authority that there is just a faint possibility that Mr. Lionel Dering, who lately escaped from prison, may be hidden somewhere about the place."

Edith's little musical thrill of laughter was delicious. "Do you hear that, aunty?" she called out to Mrs. Garside, who was sitting at work in the parlour. "They positively suspect poor you and me of being two conspirators, and of having Mr. Dering hidden somewhere about us—in your work-basket, aunty, or up the chimney, or under the sofa. Is it not a charming idea?"

"My dear, I always told you that you were too much of a madcap," responded Mrs. Garside as she quietly proceeded to re-thread her needle. "You must remember that, although this is supposed to be a free country, you are not allowed to laugh at the police."

"But I do so enjoy being thought a conspirator. I wish we had poor Mr. Dering under our roof, don't you, aunty? I would give very much to know what has become of him." Then, turning to Martha, she added: "Martha, you will please conduct these gentlemen all over the house, from garret to cellar—there must be no room held sacred from them—not even our bedrooms. And be careful that you treat them with respect."

"With the deepest respect," chimed in Mrs. Garside, "or you may find yourself a prisoner before you are aware of it."

"And now, sir," said Edith, turning to Drayton, to whom this style of treatment was altogether new and puzzling, "you will perhaps oblige me by beginning your perquisition with this room," indicating the little parlour; "after which my servant will accompany you over the rest of the house."

"No perquisites allowed in the police, ma'am," said Drayton, with the air of a man whose moral sense was shocked by the bare mention of the word.

"You misunderstand me," said Edith, with a smile. "What I meant was, that I wish you to search this room first of all, as I should not like my aunt to be disturbed more than is absolutely necessary."

"Don't trouble about me, my dear," said Mrs. Garside. "This good gentleman's visit is quite a godsend. We see so little company, and get so very mopey sometimes, that the incident of this afternoon comes quite as a pleasant change, and will serve us to talk about for many a day to come."

So Mr. Drayton, coughing deferentially behind his hand, did just take a cursory glance round the little chintz-furnished room. "Not such a fool as to expect to find him there," he said to himself as he bowed himself out again.

Then Edith made him a haughty little curtsey, and politely shut him out, as though she had done with him for ever and a day.

"I don't like that man's look," whispered Mrs. Garside as soon as the door was closed.

"Nor I," answered Edith. "I know by his eyes that he is brimful of suspicion; and yet I cannot believe that he is acting on any positive information." Her assumption of indifference had vanished utterly. She was the loving, anxious, heart-wrung wife again.

She sank on her knees and rested her head for a moment on Mrs. Garside's knee. The killing anxiety of the last few weeks was beginning to tell upon her in despite of herself. But next moment she was on her feet again, and, gliding across the floor, she crouched down and glued her ear to the keyhole.

"They are in the breakfast-room," she whispered. And then in a little while: "Now they are in the kitchen."

A few minutes later came the ominous words: "And now they are going upstairs!"

Pale and terror-stricken the two ladies waited, every minute seeming an hour, while the heavy footsteps overhead went tramping with slow, methodical precision from room to room. So long as they kept out of the fatal dressing-room it did not matter, but that was the very place, or so it seemed to Edith, where they lingered longest of all. "Will they never come out of that room?" she kept on asking herself with agonized earnestness. And then her very heart would seem to stand still with the intensity of her listening. The slow seconds measured themselves accurately by the clock on the chimney-piece, but still no sounds reached her to indicate that any discovery had been made; and at length, with intense relief and thankfulness, she heard the heavy footsteps come tramping downstairs.

The footsteps passed slowly into the dining-room, and then Edith could hear the low muttering of two or three voices, as though the superintendent and his men were deep in consultation.

"Surely the worst is over," said Mrs. Garside. "A few minutes more and they will be gone."

But suddenly Edith started to her feet with an exclamation. "There were three men went upstairs," she cried, "but only two of them have come down! Why has not the third man come down with the others?"

"Are you quite sure that you are not mistaken?" asked Mrs. Garside, anxiously.

"Quite sure, aunt—only too sure. I cannot bear to be shut up

here any longer. Better to know the worst at once. I will go and see for myself."

And before Mrs. Garside had time to interpose, Edith had opened the door almost without a sound, had passed out of the room, and was gliding noiselessly upstairs, so as not to be heard by the men in the dining-room.

Edith was right. Three men had gone upstairs and only two had come down. The laggard was Mr. Drayton's second in command—Sergeant Tilley.

Mr. Tilley was a tall, lanky, weak-kneed man, with watery eyes and a slow, hesitating way of speaking, rather uncommon among gentlemen of his profession. He had been on duty for the last twelve hours, and, feeling thoroughly worn out, had sat down to rest for a moment on a corner of the sofa in Edith's dressing-room, and there he was left by Mr. Drayton and the other constable when they followed Martha Vince downstairs. He sat down to rest for a minute, and his thoughts flew home to Mrs. Tilley and the five little Tilleys, who had to be fed, clothed, and lodged—after a fashion—out of his scanty wage. "Ah!" he sighed to himself, "if I could but spot this Mr. Dering, and get the reward, what a happy man I should be! But there's no such luck. Bill and Kitty will have to go without their shoes for another week or two; and as for the old woman's new gown, why ——"

Sergeant Tilley never finished his sentence. Deceived by the silence in the room, believing all danger to be at an end, and cramped in every limb from standing so long in one position without moving, Lionel Dering touched the spring, pushed open the false back of the wardrobe, and prepared to emerge from his hiding-place. The first object that met his startled gaze was the terror-stricken face of Sergeant Tilley, who, seated on the extreme edge of the sofa, was gazing at him as though he were some unsubstantial ghost come to revisit the pale glimpses of the moon.

Lionel changed colour, and his heart sank within him. To go back was useless—impossible. Instead of retreating, he advanced a step or two into the room, and then stood still.

The sergeant rose to his feet. His presence of mind was coming back to him. Visions of four hundred golden sovereigns floated before his dazzled eyes. He too advanced a step or two. "You are my prisoner," he said, and he stretched forth his hand as if to arrest Lionel. But that very instant his hand was seized, and Edith was before him—her white, pleading face, tearful and agonized, uplifted to his, her white and slender fingers clasped tightly round his bony wrist.

"No—no—no!" she cried, in low, hurried accents. "You must not—you shall not arrest him! You are a man, a husband, a Christian! He is my husband, and he is innocent. I swear before Heaven that he is innocent. Arrest him, and his blood will lie at your door and be a curse upon you and yours for ever."

"I—I must do my duty, ma'am," stammered Tilley. "This gentleman is my prisoner, and he must come along with me."

"Four hundred pounds are offered for his capture," said Edith. "No one but you knows that he is here. Keep that knowledge to yourself—lock it up as a secret in your own breast, and six hundred pounds shall be put into your hands this very night."

"Six hundred pounds!" murmured Tilley. He was staggered by the amount.

"Yes, two hundred pounds more than the reward shall be yours, and your hands will be free from the stain of innocent blood. Look at him—look at that man," she cried, "and tell me, is that the face of a murderer?"

Lionel came a step or two nearer. "My wife has but spoken the truth," he said. "As there is a Heaven above us, I am as innocent of the murder of Mr. Osmond as you are!"

"You are a good man—you are a kind-hearted man," pleaded Edith. "I can see it in your face—I can read it in your eyes. You have a wife and children. Think what you can buy for them—think with what comforts you can surround them, out of six hundred pounds. But stain your hands with that vile blood-money and you will be a marked man among your fellow-men to the last hour of your miserable life!"

"Tilley, Tilley, where are you? Why don't you come down?" called Mr. Drayton from below.

"Coming, sir—coming," cried Tilley.

For a moment he hesitated. But Edith was still before him. His rough hands were still clasped by her delicate fingers. Her lovely face—pallid, despairful—was gazing up at him with tearful and beseeching eyes. Sergeant Tilley was but a man, and a soft-hearted one. Here was a beautiful woman begging and praying of him to accept six hundred pounds. "I never could stand out against a woman's tears," he said to himself; and being no more than mortal, he succumbed.

"Have the money ready by nine o'clock to-night," he said in a hoarse whisper. "I'll come for it myself, and give three taps at the kitchen-door. One of you can just open the door a few inches and put the money out, and I'll take it—and you needn't see me and I needn't see you."

Edith pressed the sergeant's rough hand to her lips in a passion of gratitude, and then fell back in a dead faint. With a warning finger held up to Lionel, Mr. Tilley quitted the room and joined the superintendent downstairs. Five minutes later Martha Vince shut the door behind the three men. Mr. Drayton was quite satisfied that Lionel Dering was hidden nowhere about Alder Cottage. "But for the life of me," he said to his companions as they walked down the garden, "I can't understand why the doors and windows are fastened up with so many chains and bolts and screws, unless they've got something hidden

somewhere that they are precious sweet on and want to keep all to themselves."

"Ah," responded Tilley with a knowing shake of the head, "women are but timorous creatures when they live by themselves, and Alder Cottage is a lonely place at the best of times."

At five minutes past nine that same evening three low, distinct raps sounded on the back door of Alder Cottage. The door was opened a little way, and a hand, holding a bag full of gold and notes, was thrust out into the darkness. Another hand in the darkness took the bag: there was a sound of retreating footsteps; the door was shut and bolted, and all was dark and silent as before.

All these things were duly told to Tom Bristow when he next visited Alder Cottage. Lionel was disposed to think that now the search had proved unsuccessful all danger, at least for a little while to come, was at an end. But Tom was by no means so satisfied on that point, and what had just happened only made him all the more anxious to get his friend away to some safer and more distant hiding-place. After many conversations and much discussion pro and con, a plan was at length agreed upon which Tom, with characteristic energy, at once began to put into execution. A few days were necessary for the preparation of certain details. But, before those few days were over, quite a new and unexpected turn was given to the course of events at Alder Cottage.

## CHAPTER XX.

### FLOWN.

The man whom Tom Bristow had employed for the construction of the wardrobe which had proved of so essential a service to Lionel Dering, was a cabinet-maker named Paul Wigley, who kept a small shop in the neighbourhood of Seven Dials, London. It was the very obscurity of this man, and the pettiness of his business, which had tempted Tom to employ him. It was not probable that a man in his position would ask any impertinent questions as to the purpose for which such a strange piece of workmanship was intended, so long as he was paid ready money for his job. And so far Tom was right. Wigley made the wardrobe according to instructions, and treated the whole affair as though he were in the habit of making articles of furniture with false backs to them every day in the week. But Tom's first mistake lay in thinking that such a man would be less likely than a more reputable and well-to-do tradesman to connect in his own mind, as two links in a possible chain, the escape of a prisoner from Duxley gaol with the fact of having sent to that very town a wardrobe so constructed that a man might be hidden away in it with ease. Tom's second mistake lay in letting Wigley know the destination of the wardrobe. "I

ought to have had it sent to the railway-station addressed simply to my order," he said to himself, "and afterwards, when it was entirely out of Wigley's hands, have re-addressed it myself to Alder Cottage."

Tom was quite aware that on this point he had committed an error of judgment; but he never apprehended that the slightest danger could spring therefrom.

Mr. Wigley, after working very hard for six days, generally devoted a portion of the seventh to posting himself up in the news of the week. After a hearty dinner, it was his delight on a Sunday afternoon to sit at ease and enjoy his newspaper and his pipe. He had taken great interest in the escape of Lionel Dering, as detailed in his favourite journal; and week after week he carefully culled whatever scraps of news he could find, that bore the remotest reference to that strange occurrence. One day he came across the following lines, which he read to his wife.

"We understand that up to the present time the police have obtained no clue to the whereabouts of Mr. Dering, the prisoner whose clever escape from Duxley gaol was duly chronicled in our columns a few weeks ago. It was thought at one time that the right track had been hit upon, but, when promptly followed up, it ended in nothing—or, rather, in the capture and detention of an innocent person for several hours. So long a time has now elapsed since the escape that the chances of the prisoner being recaptured would seem to be very problematical indeed."

"I hope, with all my heart, that he'll get safe away," said Mrs. Wigley. "What a strange thing it was, Paul, that that queer wardrobe which you made for a gentleman a month or two since should be for somebody in Duxley—the very town where this Mr. Dering broke out of prison. What a capital hiding-place that would make for him, Paul, dear! All the police in England would never think of looking for him there."

"You talk like a fool, Maria," growled Mr. Wigley between the puffs at his pipe.

But however foolishly Mrs. Wigley might talk, the idea originated by her was one which took such persistent hold on her husband's mind that, three days later, he found himself at Duxley, and telling the tale of the wardrobe in the office of the superintendent of police. Very fortunately indeed it happened that on this particular afternoon Mr. Drayton was away on business at a neighbouring town, and that Sergeant Tilley was acting as deputy in his stead. Tilley listened to the man's story with dismay. He had pocketed the six hundred pounds; and now he felt almost as much interested in Mr. Dering getting safely away as Tom Bristow himself. What was to be done? His first thought was to pooh-pooh Wigley and his story, and to persuade the little cabinet-maker to return to town by the first up train. But Wigley

was not a man to let himself be snuffed out in that way, and he quietly intimated that he would await the return of Mr. Drayton himself. Then Tilley's manner changed, and, while professing to agree with him in everything, he persuaded Wigley to take his leave for a couple of hours, by which time, he told him, Mr. Drayton would have returned and would be at liberty to see him.

No sooner was Wigley gone than, leaving the office in charge of a subordinate, Tilley hastened by back streets and unfrequented ways to Alder Cottage. He asked for Edith and told her his story in a few hurried words. His counsel was that, at every risk, Mr. Dering must be got away from the cottage before seven o'clock that evening, as there was no doubt that shortly after that hour Mr. Drayton might be expected to pay a second domiciliary visit. He, Tilley, would take care that the policeman on duty on that particular beat should be withdrawn for a couple of hours on one pretext or another, so that there might be no fear of any interruption from him. Then, after a last word of warning, he went.

As it fell out, Tom Bristow was at the cottage at the very time of Tilley's visit. A council of war was immediately held. That Lionel must leave the cottage, and at once, was the one imperative necessity. Had it been mid-winter, instead of summer, he could easily have stolen away through the darkness, but at seven o'clock on an August evening everything is almost as clearly visible as at mid-day.

However, go Lionel must; and the only question was—whither should he go? Where should he hide himself for a few hours?—or till the plan of action already decided upon by the two friends could be safely carried into effect?

In this extremity, Tom's thoughts seemed to revert naturally to Jane Culpepper; in which direction, indeed, they had travelled very often of late. Why not appeal to her! Why not ask her to shelter Lionel for a night or two at Pincote? He knew, without asking, that Miss Culpepper would be ready and glad to befriend Lionel at every risk.

A few minutes past seven o'clock, Tom Bristow walked leisurely out through the front door of Alder Cottage. A minute or two later Lionel Dering, dressed like a carpenter, with a paper cap on his head and a basket of tools slung over his left shoulder, walked leisurely out through the back door, and keeping Tom well in view, followed him at a distance of thirty or forty yards. Avoiding as much as possible the main thoroughfares of the little town, Tom dived through one back street after another, till after several twistings and turnings, he reached a lonely lane leading into some fields through which ran a footpath in the direction of Pincote. Step for step, Lionel followed, smoking a short black pipe, and having the gait and manner of a man who is pretty well worn out with a long day's work. Through the fields they went thus in single file, without decreasing the distance between each other

or speaking a word, till at length the path brought them to the outskirts of a tiny wood at one corner of the Pincote estate. There was not a soul to be seen, and the two men overleaping the hedge, were soon buried among the tangled undergrowth of the plantation. Here they held a hurried consultation. It would not do for Lionel to venture any nearer to Pincote till after dark, and Tom had yet to contrive some means of seeing Miss Culpepper alone, and of explaining to her the position of Lionel and himself. The Squire, when at home, generally dined between six and seven, and the best time for seeing Jane would be while her father was taking his post-prandial nap before he joined her in the drawing-room. So, leaving the wood, Tom went slowly toward Pincote, wishing that the shades of evening would deepen twice as fast as they were doing just then; while Lionel, left alone, clambered up into the green recesses of a sturdy chestnut, and there, safely hidden from any chance passers by, awaited, with what patience was possible to him, the signal which would announce to him the return of his friend.

Once again Mr. Drayton's imperative summons echoed through Alder Cottage, but this time he was expected, and had not to wait so long for admission. As before, Martha Vince admitted him, and, as before, Edith came out of the little parlour at the first sound of his voice.

"Is the lady within whom I saw when I was here before?" asked the superintendent of Martha.

"Yes, I am here, as you see, Mr. Drayton," answered Edith. "To what circumstance do I owe the honour of a second visit from you?"

"Sorry to have to confess it, ma'am, but there was one part of the house which we seem to have quite overlooked when we were here last. You won't, perhaps, object to our having a look at it now?"

"My objections, I am afraid, would be of little value. I have no option but to submit."

"I must do my duty, you know, ma'am. Very disagreeable it is to do at times, I assure you."

"Doubtless, very. Martha, show these gentlemen whatever part of the house they may wish to see." With these words, Edith went back into the parlour, but this time she did not shut the door.

"Mr. Drayton was followed into the house by Wigley, the cabinet-maker; and the rear was brought up by a constable in plain clothes.

"Upstairs, if you please," said the superintendent to Martha. "I am quite satisfied with the downstairs part of the house."

So upstairs they all tramped, and without pausing, Drayton led the way into Edith's dressing-room. Wigley's first mention of the wardrobe had brought to his recollection the fact of there being such a piece of furniture as the one described in one of the upstairs rooms.

Now that the moment for making the grand discovery was at hand, it would have been difficult to say whether the excitement of Drayton or of Wigley was the more intense. The latter was lured on by the prospect of the glittering reward that would become his, if, through his instrumentality, the escaped prisoner should be recaptured. Drayton was led on by a purely professional ardour. To succeed, where the great Whiffins from Scotland Yard had failed, even though that success were won by a fluke, and by no brilliant stroke of his own genius, was in itself something to be proud of—something that would bring his name prominently before the notice of his superiors.

"This is the article that I've been speaking to you about," said Wigley, striking the polished surface of the wardrobe with his open palm.

"Open it, Mr. Wigley, if you please," said the superintendent. "This is a very curious piece of furniture indeed, and I should like to examine it thoroughly."

So Wigley proceeded to open it slowly and lovingly, as a man having a deep admiration for the work of his own hands. First the outer doors were flung wide open, revealing a few empty garments drooping drearily from the pegs. But when Mr. Wigley, with a solemn finger, touched the secret spring, and the false back swung slowly open on its secret hinges, the three men pressed forward with beating pulses and staring eyes, feeling sure that in another moment the great prize would be in their grasp.

Drayton's fingers closed instinctively on the handcuffs in his pocket, while Martha Vince looked on from the background with a cynical smile.

The false back swung slowly open and revealed the hiding-place behind. But it was empty.

"Flown!" said Wigley with a deep sigh, all his golden visions vanishing like the shadow of a dream.

"Sold! most infernally sold!" exclaimed Drayton, his face a picture of blank discomfiture. "It's no good waiting here any longer," he added, as he turned on his heel. "He's got clear away, never fear."

Downstairs the three men tramped, without another word, and, marching out, banged the front door behind them with a force that made every window in the little cottage rattle in its frame.

"Gone at last, thank Heaven!" exclaimed Edith, as the echo of the retreating footsteps died away. "If only I had tidings that my darling is safe, then I almost think that I should be quite happy." Unbidden tears were in her eyes as she stood for a moment with clasped hands and upturned face, while from her heart a silent prayer of thankfulness winged its way on high.

Tom Bristow lingered about the grounds and shrubberies at Pincote

till the dusky evening was deepening into night, and the lamps in the drawing-room were alight. Then, with cautious footsteps, he stole nearer the house, and at last found himself ensconced behind a clump of holly, and close to one of the three French windows which opened from the drawing-room on to the lawn. The venetians were down, but between the interstices he could obtain a clear view of the room and its inmates. The inmates were only two in number—Miss Culpepper and another young lady whom Tom had never seen before. The Squire, if at home, had not left the dining-room. How pretty Jane looked as she sat there in the lamp-light, in her soft flowing dress of white and mauve, plying her needle swiftly—for Jane's fingers were rarely unemployed—while her companion read to her aloud! Her every look, her every gesture, went direct to Tom's heart. He was caught in the toils at last—this cold, self-willed, unimaginative man of the world—and he began to find that, even for such as he, such bonds are not easily broken.

"This is either love or something very much like it," he muttered to himself. "I find that I am just as great an ass as my fellow-men. What is it in this girl that fascinates me so strangely? She is not particularly clever, or handsome, or witty, or accomplished. I have been in the society of women who could outshine her in every way; and yet, for me, she is the one woman whom the world holds—the one woman whom I ever felt that I could love. It is easy to talk about dying for a woman, and not very difficult to do so, I daresay. The grand test of love, as it seems to me, is to live with a woman and to love her at the end of twenty years as well as you loved her on your wedding-day. Now, of all the women I have ever met, yonder fairy is the only one with whom I should care to try the experiment. *Her* I fancy I could love as well at the end of a hundred years as of twenty; and yet of what the charm consists that draws me to her—whence it comes, and how she exercises it—I know no more than the man in the moon."

But Tom's love-reveries did not absorb him to the extent of making him oblivious of the particular object which had brought him to Pincote. It was requisite that he should see Jane alone, and nothing could be done so long as Jane's companion was in the room with her. Besides which, the Squire might come in at any moment, and then his last chance would be over. Should the worst come to the worst, he was prepared to go boldly up to the front door, knock like any ordinary visitor, and ask to see Miss Culpepper openly and boldly. But it was only as a last resource that he would adopt a measure which, should it come to the Squire's ears, could only lead to inquiry; and inquiry on the Squire's part was what Tom was particularly wishful to avoid. Not that the old man would not have been as staunch as steel in such a case, and would have done anything and everything to assist Lionel. But, unfortunately, he had a garrulous tongue, which could not always be trusted to keep a secret—which often betrayed secrets without

knowing that it had done so; and in a matter so grave as the one in which he was now engaged, Tom was careful to avoid the slightest unnecessary risk. It would be far better for everyone that the Squire should rest in happy ignorance, till the future should bring its own proper time for revealing everything.

Whenever any particular question pressed itself strongly on Tom's mind for solution, he had a habit of looking at it, not from one or two points of view only, but from several; and if nineteen ways out of a difficulty proved, from one cause or another, to be unavailable, he generally found the twentieth to be the very mode of egress for which he had been seeking. So it was in the present case. After considerable cudgelling of his brains, he hit on a simple expedient which seemed to him to be worth trying, but which might or might not prove successful in the result.

On the occasion of Tom's first visit to Pincote, among other pieces played by Jane in the drawing-room after dinner, was a plaintive little waltz, entitled "Venez à Moi," which took his fancy more than anything he had heard for a long time. Later on in the evening he had asked Jane to play it again, and for days afterwards the air clung to his memory, and seemed in some strange way to mix itself up in his musings whenever he thought of Jane. As if Jane had some faint divination that such was the case, the next time Tom was at Pincote she played the waltz again—this time without being asked; and so also on the third and last time he spent an evening with her. It was on this third occasion, as the final bars of the waltz were dying away in slow-breathed sweetness, that the eyes of Tom and Jane met across the piano—met for a moment only; but that one moment sufficed to reveal a secret which, as yet, they had hardly ventured to whisper to themselves. From that day forth, never so long as they lived, could that simple French melody be forgotten by either of them.

Tom thought of Blondin, and determined to try the effect of "Venez à Moi" in attracting Jane's attention. Only, as he happened to live in this unromantic nineteenth century, and to be possessed neither of a harp nor of skill to play one, there was nothing left for him but to whistle it.

Retiring from the window a dozen yards or more, but still keeping well within the shelter of the shrubbery, Tom accordingly began to "flute the darkness with his low sweet note." In other words, he began to whistle "Venez à Moi." At the end of five minutes, which to him seemed more like an hour, the venetians were lifted, and some one could be seen peering into the darkness there. A few quick strides carried Tom to the window.

Although startled when the first notes of the familiar air fell on her ear, Jane was not long in divining who it was that was there. Inventing an errand for her companion which took that young lady out of

the room for a few minutes, she hurried to the window and looked out. A tap from Tom, and the window was opened. Although surprised to see him, and at being so summoned, she frankly offered her hand.

"When you have heard my errand, Miss Culpepper, you will, I am sure, pardon the liberty I have taken," said Tom.

Her thoughts reverted in an instant to her father, but he was snoring peacefully in the dining-room. "I hope, Mr. Bristow, that you are the bearer of no ill news," she said with simple earnestness.

"My news is either good or bad, as people may choose to take it," answered Tom. "Miss Culpepper—my friend, Lionel Dering, is hiding within a mile of this house."

"Oh, Mr. Bristow!" His words took her breath away. She turned giddy, and had to clutch at the window to keep herself from falling.

"The place where he has been hiding since his escape from prison is safe no longer," resumed Tom. "Another hiding-place must be found for him, and at once. In this great strait, I have ventured here to ask your assistance."

"And have made me your debtor for ever by so doing," said Jane, with fervour. "My help is yours in any way and in every way that you can make it useful."

"What I am here to ask you to do is, to give my friend food and shelter for three days and nights, by which time a plan, now in preparation, for getting him away to some more distant place, will be ready to be put into operation."

"I will have my own rooms got ready for Mr. Dering without a moment's delay," said Jane.

"Pardon me," said Tom, "but the very kindness of your offer would defeat the object we have most in view. Dering's safety depends on the absolute secresy which must enshroud this night's transactions. What you have just suggested could not be carried out without exciting the suspicions of one or more of your servants. From suspicion to inquiry is only one step, and from inquiry to discovery is often only another."

"You are right, Mr. Bristow. But you are not without a plano f your own, I am sure."

"What I would venture to suggest is this," said Tom: "that Dering be locked up in one or another of the disused and empty rooms of which I know there are several at Pincote. No domestic must have access to the room while he is there, nor even glean the faintest suspicion that the room is occupied at all. The secret of the hiding-place must be your secret and mine absolutely. If I am asking too much, or more than you can see your way to carry out without imperilling the safety of my friend, you will tell me so frankly, I am sure, and will aid me in devising some other and more possible mode of escape."

"You are not asking too much, Mr. Bristow. In such a case you

cannot ask too much. Your plan is better than mine. This old house is big enough to hide half-a-dozen people away in. There is a suite of four rooms in the left wing, which rooms have never been used since mamma's death, and which are never entered by the servants except for cleaning purposes, and then only by my instructions. Those rooms I place unreservedly at Mr. Dering's disposal. There he will be perfectly safe for as long a time as he may choose to stay. I will wait on him myself. No one else shall go near him."

"I felt sure that my appeal to you would not be in vain."

"It will make me happier than I can tell you, if I may be allowed to assist, in however humble a degree, in helping Mr. Dering to escape. We all liked him so much, and we were all so thoroughly convinced of his innocence, that when the news was brought next morning of how he had got out of gaol overnight I could not help crying, I felt so glad; and I never saw papa so pleased and excited before. Since then, it has always been my task at luncheon to run carefully through the morning papers and see whether there was any news of Mr. Dering. From our hearts we wished him God speed wherever he might be; and as day passed after day, and there came no news of his recapture, we cheered each other with the hope that he had got safely away to some far distant land. And yet all this time, from what you say, he must have been hiding close at hand!"

"Yes, very close at hand—within half a mile of the prison from which he escaped."

"And it was you who helped him to escape!" said Jane. "I know now that it could have been no one but you." She laid her fingers lightly on his arm as she said these words, and looked up full into his eyes. They both stood in the soft glow of the lamplight close to the open window. In Jane's eyes and face at this moment there was an expression—an indefinable something, tender and yet pathetic—that thrilled Tom as he had never been thrilled before, and told him, in language which could not be mistaken, that he was loved.

"Lionel Dering and I are friends. He saved my life. What could I do less than try to save his?"

"I wish that I had been born a man," said Jane inconsequently, with a little sigh.

"In order that you might have gone about the world assisting prisoners to escape?"

"No—in order that I might try to win for myself such a friend as you are to Mr. Dering, or as Mr. Dering is to you."

"But your mission is a sweeter one than that of friendship: you were sent into the world to love."

"That is what men always say of women. But to me, friendship always seems so much purer and nobler than love. Love—as I have read and heard—is so selfish and exacting, and ——"

"Jane, dear, where are you?"

Jane gave a start, and Tom sank back into the shade. "Coming, dear, in one moment," cried Jane. Then she whispered hurriedly to Tom: "Be here at half-past eleven to-night with Mr. Dering." She gave him her fingers for a moment and was gone.

For four days and four nights Lionel Dering lay in hiding at Pincote. Jane waited upon him herself, and so carefully was the secret kept that no one under that roof—inmate, guest, or servant—had the slightest suspicion of anything out of the ordinary course.

Meanwhile, Tom Bristow had paid a flying visit down into the wilds of Cumberland, among which, as incumbent of a tiny parish buried among the hills, was settled an old chum of Lionel—George Granton by name. To him, at Lionel's request, Tom told everything, and then asked him whether he would take Dering as a guest under his roof for two or three months to come. In the warmest manner possible Granton agreed to do this, and Tom and he became fast friends on the spot.

Two days later Lionel bade farewell to Pincote and its youthful mistress, and set out on his journey to the north. Tom and he started together one evening near midnight, and walked across country to a little road-side station some fifteen miles away, on a line different from that which ran through Duxley. Here they were in time to catch the early parliamentary train, and here the two friends bade each other good-bye for a little while. Lionel travelled under the name of the Rev. Horace Brown, and that was the name on the one small portmanteau which formed his solitary article of luggage. He had injured his health by over-study, and he was going down into Cumberland to recruit. He was closely shaven, his complexion was dark, and his hair jet black. Being somewhat weak-sighted, he wore a pair of large blue spectacles. His hat, far from new, and rather broad in the brim, was set well back on his head, giving him a simple countryfied expression. He wore a white cravat, and a collar that was rather limp, and a long clerical coat that reached below his knees; while his black-kid gloves were baggy and too long in the fingers. In one hand he carried an alpaca umbrella badly rolled up, and in the other—the weather being moist and muddy—a pair of huge goloshes, of which he seemed to take especial care. Such, in outward semblance, was the Rev. Horace Brown.

At Crewe Station he had to alight, wait a quarter of an hour, and then change into another train. As he was slowly pacing the platform, whom should he see coming towards him but Kester St. George, who, on his side, was waiting for the express to London. The two men passed each other once, and then again, for Lionel was daring in the matter; but not the slightest look of recognition flashed into Kester's eyes as they rested for a moment on the face of the Rev. Horace Brown.

A few minutes later their different trains came up, and each went his separate way.

Kester St. George's way was London-wards. He drove straight to his chambers; and, after dressing, strolled out westward, and presently found himself at his club. There were a number of men there whom he had not seen for some time, who came up to him in ones and twos and shook hands with him, and said, "How are you, old fellow? Glad to see you back;" or, "Ah, here you are, dear boy. Quite missed you for ever so long," and then passed on. Kester's monosyllabic answers were anything but propitiatory, and by-and-by he was left to eat his dinner in sulky solitude. Truth to say, he was fagged and worn, and was, in addition, seriously uneasy with regard to the state of his health. For the last two months he had been telling himself day after day that he would consult his physician, but he had not yet found courage to do so. It was an ordeal from which he shrank as a young girl might shrink at the sight of blood. So long as he had not consulted his doctor, and did not know the worst, he flattered himself that there could not be anything very serious the matter with him. "Once get into those vampires' hands," he said, "and they will often keep a fellow lingering on for years." So he went on from day to day, and put off doing what he felt in his secret heart he ought to have done previously. "I believe it's neither more nor less than indigestion," he would mutter to himself. "I believe that half the ills that flesh is heir to, spring from nothing but indigestion."

He was sitting moodily over his claret, and the club-room was almost deserted, when who should come stepping daintily in but Bolus, the well-known fashionable doctor.

The evening was rather chilly, and Dr. Bolus walked up to the fire and began to air his palms, before sitting down to the evening paper. Glancing round, after a minute or two, he saw Kester sitting alone no great distance away. "Evening, St. George. Revenons toujours, eh?" he said with a nod and a smile.

St. George rose languidly and crossed towards the fireplace. "Why not tell Bolus?" he said to himself. "Capital opportunity for getting his opinion unprofessionally as between one friend and another. If anybody can put me on my pins again, Bolus can."

Between Kester St. George and the fashionable doctor there were not many points in common. Their orbits of movement were diametrically opposed to each other, and, as a rule, were far apart. One bond of sympathy there was, however, between them: they were both splendid whist-players. At the club table they had sat in opposition, or as partners, many a time and oft, and each respected the other's prowess, while thinking his own style of play incomparably superior.

"Not seen you here for some time," said the Doctor, as Kester held out his hand.

"No, I only got back the other day from Baden and Homburg. Went for three months, but came back at the end of six weeks. One gets weary of the perpetual glitter and frivolity of those places: at least, I do. Besides which, I was a little hipped—a little bit out of sorts, I suppose—and so I seemed naturally to gravitate towards home again."

"Out of sorts, eh?" said Bolus, fixing him with his keen professional look. "What's amiss with you? Been punting too much, or backed the favourite too heavily for the St. Leger?" and he took St. George's wrist between his thumb and finger.

"Neither one nor the other," said Kester, with a little hollow laugh. "I seem to be getting out of repair generally. Some little cog or wheel inside won't act properly, I suppose, and so the whole machine is getting out of gear."

"So long as we keep the mainspring right there's not much to be afraid of," said Bolus with his expansive professional smile, which was as stereotyped and fictitious as professional smiles, whether of ballet-girls or doctors, always are.

"Your pulse is certainly not what it ought to be," went on Bolus, in his airy, graceful way, as though he were imparting a piece of information of the pleasantest kind; "but then how seldom one's pulse is what it ought to be. Do you ever experience any little irregularity in the action of the heart?"

"Yes, frequently. Sometimes it seems to stop beating for a second or two."

"Yes—yes—just so," said Bolus, soothingly. "And you find yourself getting out of breath more quickly than you used to do, especially when you walk a little faster than ordinary, or have to climb a number of stairs?"

"Yes, a little thing now-a-days puts me out of puff."

"Precisely so. We are none of us so young as we were twenty years ago. And you sometimes feel as if you wanted an extra pillow under your head at night?"

"How the deuce do you know that?" said Kester, with a puzzled look.

Bolus laughed his little dry laugh, and began to air his palms again.

"And you have a troublesome little cough, and now and then your head aches without your being able to assign a cause why it should do so; and frequently in the night you start up in your sleep from some feeling of agitation or alarm—causeless, of course, but very real just for the moment?"

"By jove, doctor, you read me like a book!"

"Did you think of going down to Doncaster this year?" asked Bolus, as he wheeled suddenly round on Kester.

"I certainly did think of doing so. I've not missed a St. Leger for many years.

"Then I wouldn't go if I were you."

St. George stared at him with a sort of sullen surprise. "And why would you not go if you were me?" he asked, sharply.

"Simply because what you want is not excitement, but rest. And in your case, St. George, I would live as quiet a life as possible for some time to come. Down in the country, you know—farming and that sort of thing."

"I know nothing of farming, and I hate the country, except during the shooting season."

"Ah, by-the-by, that's another thing you must give up—tramping after the partridges—for this one season at least. As I said before, what you want is quietude. Half a guinea on the odd trick is the only form of excitement on which you may venture for some time to come. And harkye—a word in your ear: not quite so many club cigars, my dear friend."

Two other men, known both to Bolus and St. George, came up at the moment, and the tete-à-tete was at an end.

It was late that night when St. George got home. He let himself in with his latch-key. Groping his way into the sitting-room, he struck a match, and turned on the gas. He was in the act of blowing out the match when suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice whispered in his ear: *Come.* Simply that one word, and nothing more. Kester shivered from head to foot, and glanced involuntarily round. He knew that he should see no one—that there was no one to be seen; but all the same he could not help looking. Twice before he had felt the same ghostly hand laid on his shoulder: twice before he had heard the same ghostly whisper in his ear. Was it a summons from the other world, or what was it? There was a looking-glass on the chimney-piece, and, as he staggered forward a step or two, his eyes glancing into it saw there the reflection of a white and haggard face strangely unlike his own—the brow moist with sweat, the eyes filled with a furtive horror. Mr. St. George sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

(*To be continued.*)

# ISOBEL.

"AND as for the rest," said Miss Bell, energetically, "what absurd nonsense it is! What a climax of weak-mindedness, this dressing ourselves out in our finest feathers, and trailing about like so many peacocks, and pretending to enjoy ourselves, when we know we do not! Do you suppose anybody went to that place last night because they expected to enjoy themselves, Miss Lurkie? No, they did not. They went because other people went; because they were invited; because they have fallen into the habit of going to such places: and they knew they would be bored, and that they would hate each other, and would be glad when it was over. And they were bored, and they did hate each other, and were glad when it was over: and it served them right."

She looked down as she spoke, from the high window of Miss Lurkie's little sitting-room, with so much fine scorn in her handsome eyes, that one would have fancied she saw an offender in every innocent passer-by on the grand, dismal street below.

"Eh, my dear! my dear!" sighed kind Miss Lurkie, shaking her dear old head over her knitting, and secretly feeling a trifle fearful of committing herself. "Eh, Miss Isobel, my dear; it's o'er true, I fear, for this is a warld fu' o' iniquities an' savorin' o' vanity an' corruption."

Miss Isobel did not laugh, as she would have done a year, or even a few months ago. She was not inclined to laugh at anything that morning; she was in too cynical a mood. She rose from her seat at the window with a queer little sigh; and, coming to the fire, took a footstool at her old friend's side, and sat down upon it, contracting her brows and clasping her hands tightly about her knee.

"Is there nothing better than this?" she cried. "Is life always the same, always like Lady Drumlie's parties—fine and stupid, and grand? Is there nothing else for us to do but to be 'finished,' and 'come out,' and grow up into beauties? What is the chief end of man, I wonder, Miss Lurkie? The chief end of woman is to be handsomer than the two Miss Lushingtons, or than somebody else."

Miss Lurkie looked at the young lady over her tortoiseshell spectacles, and her look was a cautious one. It would never have done for Miss Bell to know that she was being scrutinized. The look took in the pretty, discontented face, the delicate, fine lines which had made Miss Isobel Lowther a beauty; the tall, lithe figure, the slender brows, knitted now. And then it wandered down to the clasped hands, and to a certain ring upon one finger—a gorgeous ring, whose centre diamond glittered and glared like a baleful eye.

Miss Bell was frowning at the fire, however, and saw nothing else. She went on with a shrug of her pretty shoulders.

"I sometimes wish that we had fulfilled all our engagements to the end of the programme, that we might go home and go to bed. I said as much to Lady Drumlie once: I was in one of my bad humours, and my lady was horror-stricken. She told me I was wicked, and did not appreciate my blessings. Wicked! Perhaps so: but it is no worse than—than things we say and do every day. It was the truth, at least; and one tells the truth so seldom, that even an unorthodox truth is meritorious. I—I wish we might go back to Drumlie, Miss Lurkie. I am tired of Edinburgh, and sick of London."

"Ye are no in gude sperits, my dear," said Miss Lurkie.

"I never shall be in good spirits again," was the answer, given with vehemence. "I wish Lady Drumlie had left me at home."

"I thocht that ye were wishin' for Lunnon, my dear," said Miss Lurkie. "I thocht ye were aye longen for the season."

Before the young lady could answer, the door opened, and a servant announced a visitor in the drawing-room below. Miss Bell turned with a listless air: she supposed her grandmother had sent for her.

"Who did you say it was, Andrew?"

"The Laird of Clandarrel," replied Andrew.

Then Miss Lurkie looked at her beautiful favourite again, over the dark-rimmed spectacles, and this time her glance was even more furtive and cautious than before.

Miss Bell's face had changed all at once. Her cheeks were glowing with nervous, palpitating colour, her eyes bright with trouble. She twisted her long, fair fingers unconsciously in the watch-chain at her belt.

"And—is grandmamma with him?" she asked, in some surprise.

"My lady is out, Miss Bell. The gentleman asked for Miss Lowther."

"It is my cousin Hereward," said Bell to Miss Lurkie, trying to speak with indifference, and succeeding very poorly indeed. "I wish Lady Drumlie had been at home."

But every trace of confusion had left her, before she reached the bottom of the great staircase. When she entered the grand, gloomy drawing-room, she entered it with the finest of the stately airs which so often awed the world, and had partly made her reputation for beauty.

The dullness of the day, and the heaviness of the window drapery, made the room appear additionally gloomy: but it was quite light enough for her to see, even at its farthest end, the tall, fair young giant, who rose to meet her, with eager, outstretched hand.

But, eager as he was, she barely gave him her slight, cold finger-tips.

"Oh, is it you, Hereward!" she said, hypocritically. "I hardly expected to see you. Lady Drumlie is not at home."

The young man's enthusiasm died away in an instant. He became as self-possessed as herself, but he could not be as cool.

"I will try and bear it," he said to himself. "It was not Lady Drumlie I came to see, Bell. It was you."

"Then," said Miss Bell, "you ought to have stayed away."

"I know that," he answered, biting his lips at her coldness. "But I could not stay away; and so I came, like a fool."

"Ah!" said his cousin, letting her beautiful eyes rest for a moment on his fair, angered, reproachful face. "You are in one of your absurd moods, I see. Go and sit down there:" pointing to a chair on the opposite side of the hearth.

He went and sat down, almost humbly. It was evident that he was used to obeying her, and that they were on very cousinly terms.

Then Miss Bell took a chair opposite to him, resting against the cushioned back, laying a white hand on either arm, and making quite a picture of herself, with her flowing draperies, and statuesque little head, and dangerously pretty face. She regarded her cousin quite severely, perhaps because she felt strong inward relentings. It seemed to be her fate and punishment always to feel these inward relentings when it was most dangerous to her peace of mind. She might well wish herself safely back at Drumlie, among the heath and bracken.

"How did you enjoy yourself last night, Hereward?" she asked, after an awkward pause.

"One should always regard one's enjoyment from a comparative point of view," he replied. "I enjoyed myself less than I might have done: more, perhaps, than Mr. MacGregor did, but not near so much as Strathspey."

Miss Bell put on her haughtiest air at once. "We will let that matter rest," she said. "We will not talk about Mr. Strathspey, if you please."

"No," said her cousin. "We won't talk about Mr. Strathspey, Bell. We will leave that to Lady Drumlie, who knows how to appreciate his virtues: or we will leave it to Strathspey himself, who is familiar with the subject, and can do it even greater justice than Lady Drumlie. You and I won't discuss Strathspey, for I think we have had enough of him. We will talk about ourselves: a topic at once interesting and improving."

But, struggle as he might to be merely satirical and nonchalant, he could not help failing somewhat. His most cynical tone had a tone of pain; his great blue eyes were full of boyish reproach and wounded love. Had he not loved Isobel all his life, from the time they had been children together, riding their rough ponies, and playing boy and girl games at Drumlie? And how was he to end his love, all at once, merely because her discreet relatives had made a fashionable young lady of her, and helped her to gain a wondrous reputation, and

had so far overruled her old, sweet unworldliness as to make her engage herself to this numskull of a Strathspey?—simply because Strathspey was rich and aristocratic, and would soon come into his title!

Hereward Clandarrel was not the only individual who called Strathspey a numskull; though, to be sure, his manner of so designating him was more vehement than that of other people. The young man was a simpleton; even his friends acknowledged it in secret, however reluctantly; but then what prospects lay before him! What a golden calf he was, to bow down before and worship! And was he not heir to his poor young relative, the Earl of Dumblane, who was dying of consumption? And Miss Isobel Lowther was an almost penniless beauty, and might not miss such a chance as this was? So she had suffered herself to be engaged to Strathspey, and would be married in a few weeks. And this was what the great diamond meant; and what her discontent meant; and what dear Miss Lurkie's kindly pity meant; and last, but not least, it was what her cousin Hereward's reproaches meant. Poor Viking! —Bell had given him the name of Viking, when she was fourteen, and he was the only hero in the world to her; he was so big, and strong, and blue-eyed, and fair, that it was the only title, at once romantic and heroic, that seemed fit for him—Poor "Viking!" How hard it was to him to sit at this extreme end of the hearth-rug, and look across at the entrancing face and charming figure, at that other end!—and to know that both were Strathspey's property, and not his own, as he had fondly hoped they would be!

"But then, again, why not talk about Strathspey?" he burst forth. "There is nothing left to us to talk about that I know of. I suppose I must not tell you that I love you, Bell; and it is what I always say when we speak of ourselves. Oh, confound it all! To think that simpleton should have come between us! And that you should give your sweet self to him, after—after all that has passed—after all those dear old days at Drumlie."

Bell turned her face away, saying nothing; but he saw a little quiver of the pretty, red lips, and a tremulous motion of the drooping eyelids. He rose from his chair, crossed the dreadful space between them, and knelt down upon the hearth-rug to take her beautiful, nervous hand.

"Oh, Bell!" he cried, holding it so fast that she could not draw it away. "How am I to give you up? You have not been fair to me. Was it fair to let me love you so long that it will tear my heart by the roots to let you go; and then to throw me aside because I am only the poor Laird of Clandarrel, and another man is to have an Earldom? You used to say that you would rather own the crags and hills at Clandarrel than be the Queen of England. Oh, Bell, my dear, remember what happy children we were, when we thought that Dalgarnock top was nearer the blue sky and heaven, than any other place in the world!"

It seemed to Isobel that she almost felt the fresh hill-side breeze

blowing upon her cheeks, and smelt the sun-warmed heather. She forgot her stern grandmother, Lady Drumlie; she forgot that she was a great beauty and an engaged young lady. The tears gathered in the long lashes, rolled down her face, and fell upon her hand, sparkling almost as brightly as that flashing diamond.

"We shall never be so near heaven again," she sobbed. "Oh! we shall never be so near heaven again. I am drifting farther away from it every day, Hereward. Are people always wicked and unhappy, when they grow up to be men and women?"

"Why should they be?" he said, the mist rising to his blue eyes, in his great yearning. "And why should we never be so near heaven again? It is love that brings heaven near, Bell; love, and truth, and honest faith. Lady Drumlie must have been more cruel than I have thought, if it is she who has given you such fancies." And he bent his great, fair head over the little hand, first almost crushing it in his own, and then kissing it passionately.

"Don't—oh, you must not!" said Bell, crying softly, and trying to take the hand away from him. "You are forgetting, and—and you ought to remember."

"Remember!" he echoed, kissing it still. "Remember what? That it is Strathspey's little hand now—that they have made you false to your promise to me? I should like to forget that."

"But it is not right, you know," she faltered, tearfully.

"Right!" said he, lifting his face, and looking at her. "It is as wrong as the other, Bell? No; I swear to you, it is more my hand than Strathspey's; and there lies the sin of it. Do you think I would come here, if he had won you from me honestly, heart and soul? Do you think I would utter a word of reproach to you, if I knew you cared for him as you once cared for me? I won't say as you care for me now; for if you loved me, my dear, you would have strength enough to be true to me, and fight my battles against them all. If you loved him, Isobel, I should scorn to speak. I should be ashamed to count myself a man, if I could not bear my pain in silence, and be glad that you were happy. But you know he has not the power to stir your heart for a second: you know it. And you know they have sold you to him: sold you for the sake of the dead man's shoes he is waiting to step into."

It was always the way with Clandarrel. She might begin by being cold and majestic, by treating him to the regal airs and graces, with which she overpowered her other adorers; but he invariably swept them aside, with his honest vandalism, in the end. He always brought with him such a sweet breath of the hill-sides, the loch, and the heather.

"Oh!" she said, desperately, turning to him her tear-wet face, "how I wish I had never come to Edinburgh. How I wish grandmamma had left me at home at Drumlie! But you know how firm and hard

she is," she added, piteously. "You know what cruel things she has said of poor mamma's love-match, and what a life she has led her, since papa died, and she was obliged to take us all to live at Drumlie Aiks. I wonder, myself, how poor mamma has liked to bear it. I should have died. I never remember the time when grandmamma was not sneering, in her queer way, at love and poverty; and she has often told us all—Marian, Helen, and me—that she would take good care she had no more love-matches and sentiment. You have no idea, Hereward, what cruel things she can say, and how obstinate she is. We are all afraid of her."

Stately and high-handed as this young beauty was, she was afraid of her grandmother. Dreadfully afraid of her. A terrible old woman, who was capable of any strong-minded act of vengeance against those unlucky members of her family who might dare to defy her. There were rumours that her husband, Sir Archibald, had stood in so much awe of his rigid and implacable spouse that death had been a happy release for him. It was certain that poor, pretty, gentle Mrs. Lowther had eaten bitter bread, when she had been poor, pretty, gentle Isobel Drumlie; and that she had been driven to her marriage with the scanty-endowed Scotch minister, by her mother's relentless severity.

Clandarrel knew the old Gorgon's peculiarities too well. He was as firmly convinced as Bell herself that Lady Drumlie would be capable of any harsh treatment, to carry out her will. So he said nothing: only caressed the little hand more tenderly.

"Mr. Strathspey."

Andrew's cough had been heard before the door opened, which gave notice of the approach. Mr. Strathspey entered rather awkwardly, notwithstanding the fact that he ought to have felt sure of his welcome. Perhaps, after all, he was not so very sure of it. He stared about him for a moment, and then caught sight of Clandarrel, and glared at him with his little, narrow eyes; and then he caught sight of Bell; each sitting demurely at the two extreme ends of the hearth-rug. Isobel rose slowly, and gave him her slim fingers, even less cordially than she had offered them to her cousin.

"So glad—er—to find you—er—at home," stammered the little man, overwhelmed with confusion. "Hope you are well—er after—er—dissipation last night. Delightful, wasn't it? Hope Lady Drumlie's well—er." But he did not condescend to take the slightest notice of Hereward, and, indeed, had turned his back upon him.

Miss Lowther fixed her large eyes upon him, with a cool significance.

"You have met my cousin, Mr. Clandarrel, I think."

He was obliged to see him then. And something in the calm glance of his fair betrothed made him feel that it would have been better had he seen him before.

"Ah—er—yes, to be sure," he said, as loftily as he dared. "Beg

pardon. Believe I have. How de do?" and he vouchsafed Hereward a nod, after the manner of a potentate. Confound Clandarrel! he was always in the way. But he contrived to ignore him pretty tolerably. He talked and laughed with Miss Bell, in spite of her cold indifference, and made himself as charming and witty as he knew how.

When Clandarrel rose to say good-bye to his cousin, there was an angry flush on her proud face, and a look of humiliation in her eyes. He wrung her hand almost fiercely.

"Don't come again," she contrived to whisper. "Indeed, you must not."

He quite crushed her soft fingers, in his passionate, brief pressure; and his boyish face flushed to the roots of his fair hair.

"I cannot promise that," was the rapidly murmured answer. "Good-bye, Bell, and God bless you!"

Isobel was not very gracious to her lover when Clandarrel was gone. She re-seated herself, with so cold and grand an air that Strathspey felt his heart sink into his little, varnished boots. People might envy the future earl, and call him a lucky fellow to have won so famous a beauty; but now and then, even when basking in the sunlight of her presence, he felt his spirits fail him. He was vaguely conscious that the look in her expressive eyes was not exactly an affectionate one, and that the curve of her red mouth was hardly significant of unqualified pleasure. When he tried to make a brilliant remark, her manner made him uncomfortable; and when he warmed into sentiment, she held him at more than arm's length; so that at last he was secretly prompted to ask of himself whether this was exactly the treatment he ought to expect from the future Countess of Dumblane.

She was so bright-tinted and bright-eyed this morning, that he would have liked to say something very tender indeed. But how was he to begin? She sat in her chair, her elbow upon its arm, and her cheek upon her hand, her long lashes resting on her cheek, as if she had become quite unconscious of his presence: and when he spoke she started.

"I—I beg pardon," he stammered. "I hope I did not disturb you!"

"Disturb me?" said Bell. "Oh dear no."

He drew his chair near to her side, and tried to take her hand; but, remembering who had held it last, she drew it away with such a gesture that he slipped his chair back again.

"I have written to M'Ivor about the—the diamonds," he ventured to say.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, before she had time to check herself. "I hope not."

He looked quite confounded. "You—hope—not! Why, my dear Miss Isobel, Lady Drumlie suggested that I should write."

"Can you do nothing without consulting Lady Drumlie?" she said, petulantly. "It really seems that we cannot."

It was very awkward to be snapped up in this manner, even by a beautiful young woman; and it seemed to Strathspey that she did nothing this morning but snap him up. He stiffened, consequentially.

"If you do not wish it," he began. But she interrupted him.

"Oh! if you are going to be angry, I think we had better let the matter rest, and leave everything to Lady Drumlie at once."

She looked so lovely, and stately, and indifferent, that she bewildered and baffled him completely.

"How could I be angry with you?" he rejoined. "You are too hard on me, Isobel. Somehow I seem always to say the wrong things; and I can't help thinking sometimes that—that you are not as fond of me as I am of you." And having got thus far, he rose to take her hand, and made as if he would have kissed her cheek.

The red colour, like a flame, blazed out on her face. She freed herself from his grasp, and stood erect in an instant.

"You must not do that, indeed," she protested, almost angrily. "You—you forget yourself, Mr. Strathspey."

"But," faltered her betrothed, "you have promised to be my wife, you know; and you have never allowed me to kiss you yet. I thought that when ——"

"Oh!" said Bell, in terror and desperation, "please do sit down again. Here is Lady Drumlie."

Lady Drumlie came in, marshalled by Andrew. All her servants feared her. Taking a look at the lovers, she perhaps guessed, with her usual Scotch shrewdness, that all was not quite right. Strathspey looked stiff and flushed, and awkward; Bell stood with the air of a surprised culprit. It was all very well to pretend to appear at wondrous ease, but there was an angry look on both their faces.

My lady was mild enough until Mr. Strathspey had taken his leave. It was not her way to let outsiders into the secret of her amiable home rule. Bell was about to make her escape from the room, but was called back.

"Come here," said my lady, in a significant tone. "I have something to say to you."

Bell returned, with open tremor. A fine thing it was to be a beauty, and a despot in a court of humble admirers, and then to be obliged to kneel meekly for her daily scourgings in private.

"Clandarrel has been here," said her ladyship, when her victim stood before her.

"Yes, grandmamma," replied Bell, deprecatingly; and most heartily despising herself in secret for her cowardice.

Long ago, one of the children at Drumlie Aiks—poor little Helen, who was the youngest—had privately compared Lady Drumlie to the

dreadful wolf-grandmother in the story of Red Riding-Hood; and Bell had never forgotten the simile. Those white, false teeth of my lady's, and her strong-featured Scotch face, her amiable scowl, and her small, angry eyes, were uncomfortably suggestive at all times, but they were specially suggestive to Bell this morning. Unnerved and wretched, she was strongly tempted to break forth with pathetic terror into the old childish cry, "What great, large teeth you have, grandmamma," and to listen for the answer, "All the better to eat you up with, my dear." Bell knew, by experience, that she was on the point of being eaten up.

"He was not here very long, grandmamma," she faltered.

"Oh!" said her ladyship, pretending to joke. "So! He was not here very long, was he! *How* long, pray? Long enough to make a little love, and a few sweet little speeches? I should like to have heard them. Nice boy, that Clandarrel!"

Bell began to tremble.

"Listen to me, young lady," went on her ladyship. "The next time Clandarrel presumes to come here, *I* will see him. Not you. Never you again. And I think that will be the last hour he ever darkens my doors. You recollect. Go."

Miss Lurkie, sitting in the little private room she enjoyed possession of as the family companion and housekeeper, was roused from her reverie over her knitting, by the entrance of her young mistress. Bell shut the door, and returned to her footstool, in tears and tribulation.

"Oh, Miss Lurkie," she said. "Please let me stay with you for a while, and be quiet. I don't—oh, I don't know what to do!"

"Eh, Miss Bell, my bairn?" cried the friendly old creature. "Ye must na gie way, dear. Dinna greet."

But Bell was driven to desperation. She was fain to "greet" for a few minutes, in spite of her pride.

"You do not know what I have to bear, Miss Lurkie," she said, piteously. "You and poor mamma are the only friends I have in the world." And then, thinking of Hereward and his good-bye, she flung her stately reserve to the winds, and wept openly.

Between the future Earl of Dumblane and her grandmother, Isobel Lowther led a pleasant life during the next few weeks. His visits became more frequent; and under the sharp eye of Lady Drumlie she dared not rebel. Civil, she was at least compelled to be; and he became so lover-like that she was goaded to secret frenzy. Added to this, was the pleasure of watching the preparations for the marriage. Lady Drumlie would allow of no delay, and certainly the bridegroom was eager enough. The two held confidential consultations together, about jewels and settlements, and various arrangements. Bell looked on. It could not be helped, she was sure. If she had intended to rebel, she ought to have been firm at first; but now it was too late,

and she must submit. That was all about it. So, after a week or so of passionate misery, Isobel sunk into a state of dull, cold despair, finding her only consolation in the fact that she was losing her colour and appetite, and might be taken ill and die. To Hereward she had managed to write a few lines of farewell, begging him not to come to the house again, and asking him to try and forget the dear old days at Drumlie, or only to remember her as his little playmate and cousin, and not as the Bell who had made him unhappy. And, with that, she concluded the matter would end.

But it did not end there. Unfortunately for Lady Drumlie, Clandarrel was a favourite with the world. People invited him to their dinners and soirées; and, manœuvre as she would, she could not avoid Bell's meeting him. She exercised her power in the matter of preventing their dancing together, or, indeed, doing more than exchanging brief words of greeting; but she could not order him out of the room, when he placed himself in a convenient corner, and stood there watching her charge with most objectionably tender reproach in his blue eyes.

One day, not long before that fixed for the wedding, when Lady Drumlie was out on some important business connected with it, and Isobel was sitting in a very disconsolate mood before the drawing-room fire, a visitor came in. To her terror and amazement, she found it to be no other than her cousin. He hurried to meet her, and took both her hands with his usual headlong enthusiasm.

"Hereward," she cried out, "what do you mean? How can you be so cruel? You must not stay. Grandmamma ——"

"I am not afraid of Lady Drumlie," he interrupted, tossing back his yellow hair. "Let her come! I couldn't stand it any longer, Bell, my dear."

Bell began to tremble. "You must be going mad," she said, almost angrily. "Pray go away. You—you are as bad as the rest." And then she sat down and covered her face with her hands.

He went down upon his knees, at her side on the hearth-rug, just as he had done that other day.

"Bell, my dear," he said, "I have been driven to desperation; and they are making you desperate, too. Do you think I am going to let that little simpleton marry you in spite of yourself? No, by—by Heaven! I am going to marry you myself, in the face of Lady Drumlie."

"Oh!" Bell pleaded, "please don't." But the fire was flashing from his blue eyes, and he looked as strong as a lion, and more like a giant than ever: fit to be master of the world—and of *her*.

"I beg of you, Hereward, to go away before it is too late. She may be here at any moment."

"Very well," said Hereward, bending to kiss her hand. "As I said before, let her come. Do you remember 'Young Lochinvar, Bell?"

That she did. When they had been children, playing together at Drumlie and Clandarrel, they had liked the legend of Young Lochinvar so much, that Bell had managed to set the words to an old tune, and they had sung it until everybody but Hereward was tired of hearing it. But Hereward had always been faithful to it in his heart; and he had promised Bell that if she should ever attempt to marry any one but himself, he would carry her off on her wedding-day, after their hero's valiant fashion.

"It was Strathspey who made me think of it particularly the other night—when we were at the Lushingtons', Bell. He is such an awkward fellow, you know: and as I saw him standing fidgeting before you, trying to look at ease, the old words came back to me at once,

"'The bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume.'

And then all the rest flashed upon me; and I seemed to hear you singing the gay old lilting tune in your clear, high voice, as you used to sing it when we galloped over the heather on our ponies.

"'She is won! We are gone over bank, bush and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow, quoth young Lochinvar.'"

"But why do you recal this now?" she asked.

"And then—don't look frightened, Bell—I thought, Why not, since they have left us no alternative? And why not indeed, Bell, if you will only be a brave girl, and listen to me: and you will, I know. Say you will, my darling, and you shall see how my whole life will prove to you that the honest love of an honest gentleman will go farther towards making you happy than all the earldoms in Christendom."

He put his strong young arm about her, and drew her head down on his shoulder. Poor Bell gave a sobbing sigh.

"Think of Clandarrel," he continued in a low, persuasive whisper. "Think how the sweet wind is blowing on Dalgarnoch Top this very moment, and of how blue the water looks on the loch below; and then ask yourself if you would not be happier there than here, and say you will listen, Bell."

And so he went on in his headlong, boyish fashion, pleading as for dear life. Pleading for the old love, and its sweet, childish romance; pleading with all his heart, and strength; and bringing back to her mind so many fresh and innocent memories, that in the end she was obliged to give way. And in spite of her fear, in spite of Lady Drumlie, in spite of the future Earl of Dumblane, she did listen; and listened to some purpose.

It was a very grand affair, this last party of Lady Drumlie's. All her ladyship's parties were grand affairs: but this particular one, which was to crown Miss Lowther's farewell appearance in society *as* Miss Lowther, was like none that had gone before. On the whole, it was a "jam," but a very brilliant and imposing jam. Nobody stayed at home who

was invited. People wished to see the last of the young lady whose *début* into society had created so great a sensation.

And really, on this occasion, Bell was even more well worth looking at than ever. She had never seemed to be so beautiful. Her bright eyes were almost feverish in their brilliance : and more than one guest remarked that the touch of excitement in her usually stately manner was positively an additional charm.

"But she might well look excited," these same guests observed, afterwards, one to another.

"And she might well glance towards the door every few minutes ; as I certainly saw her doing," said the prettiest Miss Lushington.

Lady Drumlie observed neither the excitement nor the glancing towards the door. She only noted, with grim satisfaction, that Bell was looking her best and creating a sensation, and that she was really amiable in her manner to Strathspey. But about the middle of the evening she noticed something else. Glancing across the room, she saw a sight that almost turned her to stone. This sight was no less a one than the figure of a fair, yellow-haired young giant, who stood head and shoulders above everybody else, and who was making his way towards herself through the crowd, with an air of the greatest complaisance and good humour.

When he reached her, her rage was great. She was almost motionless at his astounding audacity. And he bowed his head before her as coolly as if he had been her most honoured guest.

"Lady Drumlie," he said, in a low voice, "I ask your pardon for being here ; but, as a kinsman, I felt that I might dare to intrude, uninvited. I have come to have my last dance with my cousin, and when I have had it, I will go."

For a moment, she felt fit to choke him : the next, her hard old Scotch face settled back again into its grim triumph. She made a little motion with her fan to bring him nearer to her.

"If it were not for these people, who are looking and listening," she whispered, "and for the scandal it would create, I would take you by the shoulders myself, and turn you out of my house."

She drew back, nodding her fierce old head, and looking him straight in the eye. The Laird of Clandarrel felt convinced that she would have given a year or so of her remaining life, to have dared to do it.

"Thank you," he said, as composedly as before : and the sweet smile on his lips was never ruffled.

Bell, at the opposite end of the room, had seen it all, had trembled, and grown pale with excitement. Clandarrel had made his way to her, whispering the words of signal in her ear.

"'Now tread we a measure, quoth young Lochinvar,'" he said ; and he took her hand, and led her out among the dancers.

How people looked at them as they danced ! How Lady Drumlie

glared, and Strathspey fumed, as they waltzed past them, Clandarrel's head high above the crowd, his eyes sparkling, his arm around Bell's slender waist. Even the bystanders caught the spirit of it; and, oddly enough, as it seemed afterwards, a satirical young lady whispered, with a shrug of her shoulders, and a glance toward the bridegroom,

"'Twere better by far
Had we matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

The waltz was prolonged: the musicians kept it up well. Before it was ended the two had vanished. At length a curious questioning whisper began to circulate through the company. It reached the ears of Lady Drumlie. She stared about fiercely and then motioned Strathspey to her side. "Where is my granddaughter?"

"I haven't seen her. She was waltzing with that—er—fellow, you know, and ——"

"Haven't seen her!" almost shrieked the old lady. "Let me get out of the room."

She did get out of the room, and at last upstairs to Bell's chamber, where she found a nice, little cream-coloured note, laid upon the lace-frilled toilet-cushion. And Lady Drumlie, tearing open this note, learnt that all her plotting had been in vain, and that she was a baffled, defeated old woman.

"My Dear Grandmamma.—When I left the room, in the middle of the last waltz, I left it to run away with my cousin Hereward. I cannot marry Mr. Strathspey; and as you left me no other chance to escape, I was obliged to choose this one, though I would much rather have broken the engagement quietly, instead of ending it in a manner which I have no doubt will cause a romantic scandal. I have loved my cousin all my life, and would rather be his wife, and nothing but the mistress of pretty Clandarrel, than the Countess of Dumblane. I hope you will forgive me for everything else I have done to offend you; but I cannot ask you to forgive me yet for this: though I feel that I have done right, not wrong, in being true, instead of false. We shall be half way to Clandarrel before you read this, Hereward says—at any rate, beyond pursuit. And—I hope you will forgive us both in time, dear grandmamma. "In haste, yours affectionately,

"Isobel."

While Lady Drumlie was reading this guileless epistle, Bell was far on her way to Clandarrel: and, once at Clandarrel, she was safe, for she was made within the hour the young laird's wife.

And there it ended. Terrible as the escapade had seemed to her, and much as the beautiful Miss Lowther's wild marriage was discussed by society, Bell found herself as happy as the days were long.

# AT THE SCILLY ISLANDS.

*By the Author of* "A Night in a Monastery."

IT must, doubtless, be the attraction there is in danger, more than the love of adventure, that gives rise to the longing existing in most human breasts to go deep down into mines. Certain it is that in these descents into the bowels of the earth there lurks much of peril: of adventure, of interest, but little. My first visit of this kind was down a coal mine. I happened to be staying with some friends in the neighbourhood of the "Black Country," and one morning at breakfast announced my intention of exploring if occasion offered.

Miss Ann and Miss Sophia immediately turned pale as death; laid down their knives and forks, which were not taken up again that morning; and, with trembling voices and tearful eyes, besought me with all the eloquence they could command and all the dreadful accidents they could remember, to abandon my mad intention. "It was fearfully dangerous; it was a tempting of Providence; quite as many people were brought up dead as alive: some indeed who had escaped destruction had returned raving maniacs." And many other frightful judgments were laid up in store for me if I did not at once abandon this almost unholy wish.

Some afternoons later on, Miss Sophia and I were walking in the neighbourhood of the pits, when meeting an inspector and entering into conversation, I expressed my great desire to him. He very politely at once offered to take me down. Miss Sophia's limbs on the spot gave way, and she clung to us for support, whilst she implored us to give up the idea. But although two ladies had been beyond my powers of management, I found one just within such capacity of will as I possessed. Miss Sophia, racked between her desire of obliging her friend and visitor, and her fears for his safety, at length gave way. We proceeded at once to the pit's mouth: each donned a miner's dress; whilst Miss Sophia was consigned to a solitary mauvais quart d'heure in a waiting-room hard by. Looking back, I almost wonder at my cruelty to that dear lady. "We shall be down about twenty minutes," said the inspector; and Miss Sophia drew out her watch and fixed her eyes on the minute hand.

We stood on a stage over the mouth, with no protecting sides but the sides of the mine, and nothing to hold on by but the chain which was to lower us. Never shall I forget the sensation as the bolt was shot back and we began to descend: the awful feeling of the great gulf which was below us; of the fearful death in store if anything went wrong with the machinery. For a moment, dear Miss Sophia, you were well avenged. I felt that I was lost. I could easily con-

ceive that some had even lost their senses in the experiment. But this weakness quickly vanished, and I was able to enjoy the novelty of my situation. The going down into deep darkness: the mouth of the pit, which was now far off, and looked like the star of another world.

I cannot here tell you what we saw in the mine: space permits it not. And perhaps it would be easier to tell of what we did *not* see down in that dark place. On our way we passed a mine that had been worked out, and as we passed the silent, catacombed place, I felt almost in the presence of the dead; of some buried Herculaneum, or City of the Plain. Deeper and deeper down, in a lower mine, men were working almost naked, the pallor of their faces shining through the blackness. The most terrible sensation of all was that of suffocation: want of air: and when we came back to earth, happily safe and sound, it would be hard to write how thankful I felt for the fresh, pure winds of Heaven.

The inspector had said twenty minutes, and we had been down nearly an hour and a half. By reason of which we found poor Miss Sophia in an agony of dread and remorse; pacing the waiting-room to and fro, like a caged lioness (though, if you saw her little wee body and her pale kindly face, you would say she was a very gentle lioness indeed); the strings of her bonnet streaming wildly, the bonnet itself all askew, and her eyes red with horror and weeping. But all had ended happily; though it had once very nearly been the opposite; and we wended our way home together, like Don Quixote, to recount our adventures.

So when I found myself in Cornwall, and in the neighbourhood of its mines, again the impulse seized me to go down into these dark places of the earth. Here there was no Miss Sophia to stand in terror over me. Z. was perfectly willing that I should go down any number of them, provided always I did not insist upon his going down also.

Every one has heard of the tin mines of Cornwall, though it is difficult to fix the date of their early existence. Strabo, Herodotus, and other ancient writers mention them. How the Phœnicians, and, after them, the Greeks and Romans, traded for tin to Cornwall and the Scilly Islands; the latter then known as the Islands Cassiterides. The quantity of tin raised about the year 1800 was 16,820 blocks; about six and a half blocks making one ton: in 1811 the quantity produced was 14,698 blocks: in 1824 it was 28,310: in 1825 it was 24,479.

At what period the coinage of the tin, obtained within the earldom (now a dukedom) of Cornwall, was first established is not certain: but it was practically as early as the reign of King John. The working of the copper mines was not carried on to any extent until the close of the seventeenth century. In 1824 they obtained 110,000 tons of ore, producing 8,417 tons of copper, of the value of £743,253; in 1825, 118,768 tons of ore, producing 9,140 tons of copper, valued at £755,358.

We started, one clear morning, for Redruth, to inspect the Dolcoath mine, near Cambourne. The drive from Falmouth is, perhaps, one of the

most picturesque in the neighbourhood. By the side of the bay, on the opposite side of which we see hot Flushing, literally basking in the sunshine; through Penryn, where the smell of the works at the entrance half suffocates you, and transports you for a moment from fair Cornwall to the neighbourhood of the London Docks: through undulating grounds; now a valley picturesquely spanned by a high wooden viaduct; looking dangerously old, and rickety, and leaning, to bear the weight of a train; now a break in the landscape, disclosing a large, solitary, grey-stone house perched on the slope of a hill, surrounded by trees and a wealth of plants and ferns: now traversing a village, where every other building seems to be a flourishing dissenting chapel; whilst the only church in the middle of a patch of dusty, unkept grass, looks woe-begone and neglected: now ascending a hill, from which, looking back far away in the distance, on the one hand sleeps lazily in the sunshine a sheet of water, which is the Irish Channel; and on the other hand another sheet of water, which is the English Channel: the only spot on the road to Redruth where the two channels are visible at one and the same time.

Soon after this, you leave behind you all the beautiful in nature. It is unnecessary to be told that we are approaching the mining district. The mines have much to answer for. They ought, indeed, to be rich and productive in their dark, mysterious depths, for they render the surface more desolate than a sandy desert. In the distance we see tall chimneys; about us smelting-houses, some of which have long ceased to be the scene of life and activity: stretches of moor, bleak and barren, yet borrowing a certain warmth from the red tinge of the soil: and in this red tinge possessing an advantage over the black country.

Through a good deal of this desolate-looking country, we at last enter Redruth. An ancient town; once the central point for the religious rites of the ancient Britons, to which bear witness many old stones in the neighbouring hills, many basins, circles, and other objects of superstitious worship. A wooden viaduct spans the town, so elevated that to see it you have to stretch the neck uncomfortably. Over this the train passes from Truro to Penzance. It looks treacherous, and some day we shall possibly hear of a very awful calamity and downfall.

Past this unstable-looking structure—it might, from its appearance, be more ancient than the town—we turned to the left and bowled quickly over a smooth, hard, white road. At length we came to a toll-gate, through which the coachman drove without stopping, believing that a toll recently paid would clear this also. But no sooner were we through than the keeper rushed out, and gesticulating as if he had suddenly gone demented, commanded us to halt. In vain the offending Bennett held up a white ticket.

"We paid toll at the last gate," he explained; "that cleared this."

"Noa, noa!" cried the breathless keeper. "Ye hain't cleared she,"

pointing to his gate. "Her's the first toll along here, and ye must pay or turn back. I hain't nothing to do with no other gate nor she."

The toll so enforced was paid. "*Now* ye may pass on," said the keeper; who, his claim satisfied, found time to bestow upon Z. a reverential salute.

"Bless the people!" cried Z., with his rich, round laugh, as the horses started afresh. "What civility and respect do I meet with from them all!"

"Tous font honneur au roi!" was the reply. "As a rule, with the exception of hypocrites and impostors, do you think that, in this world, men receive more homage than their just portion?"

"Ah!" cried Z., shaking his head. "'Tis plainly to be observed that a great part of your days have been spent amongst the polite folk on the other side the channel."

After some little difficulty and enquiry, we got into the right track for Dolcoath mine, and ere long were at the mine itself. One of the first things observable was the manner in which the women worked; breaking the stone or ore, as it comes up from the earth, into small pieces, and wheeling great barrows-full of it to the machines that crush the stone to powder. The work was laborious enough for men, and seemed beyond the strength of many of the women. Yet they worked willingly; and being paid by the amount of work accomplished in the day, there was no idling or loitering amongst them. At the end of an industrious day they have earned about eighteenpence.

The crushed ore goes through many processes of washing, rolling, pounding, and burning, before it finally leaves the works, where is accomplished about thirteen twentieths of the process necessary for converting it into metal. It has then become a soft, brown powder, very much the colour and texture of fine snuff; and this is transported to the smelting-houses to be converted into ingots. The furnaces, at which men and women were working, threw out such heat that it was impossible to approach them: those who kept them were evidently salamanders.

Dolcoath is the largest and deepest mine in Cornwall, in some parts being as much as two hundred and fifty fathoms below the level of the sea. A more interesting mine is Botallack, which goes actually under the ocean, and yields to the adventurous explorer a very curious but not very pleasant sensation.

At two o'clock the "man-engine" would be set in motion, which works the pole or "man-ladder," by means of which the men are sent down into the mine. Imagine a pole about a foot square, and nearly fifteen hundred feet long, stretching downwards from the surface of the earth—nearly four times the height of St. Paul's. At a distance of twelve feet from each other, all down this pole, are small stages, just large enough for a man to stand upon. In the walls of the shaft, beside

the pole, fixed in the earth, all the way down, are also small landing-stages, at a distance of twelve feet from each other. The pole, when worked by the engine, is continually moving up and down, a distance of twelve feet: and each time it goes up and down, a moving stage in the pole is brought on a level with a fixed stage in the earth.

Suppose, now, the pole, or man-ladder to be set in motion by the engine. Immediately a miner steps upon the first stage of the pole and is let down twelve feet. This brings him to a level with the first stage fixed in the earth, upon which he quickly steps, and the pole goes up again twelve feet. This brings the second stage of the pole on a level with him; upon which he steps, and is taken down another twelve feet. Off the pole again to the fixed stage; the pole goes up again twelve feet, and he is on a level with the third stage. So on, for one hundred and twenty stages, when he reaches the bottom of that particular shaft—but not the bottom of the mine.

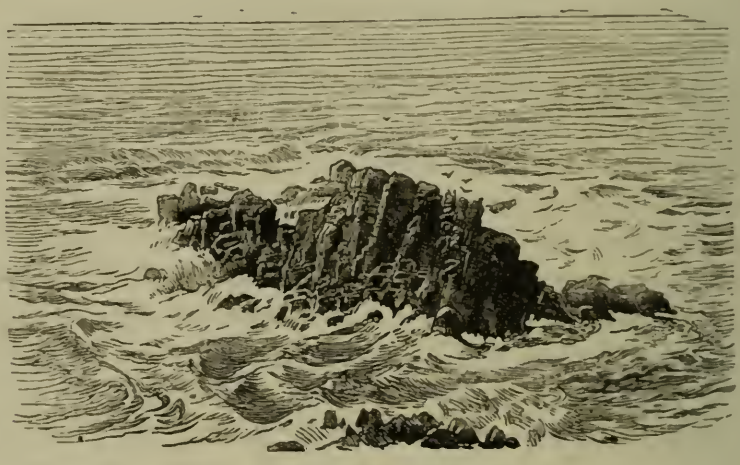
When the pole has gone down a stage, and landed the first miner on the first fixed stage, it goes up again. Whilst the first miner steps on to the second stage, a second miner steps on to the first, and commences his descent in like manner. Thus, when the first miner reaches the hundred and twentieth stage, there are one hundred and twenty miners upon the ladder, all getting on and getting off their stages at the same moment. There is just room for the performance, and none to spare; and it becomes dangerous for anyone to go down who is not accustomed to the thing: who is of an absent or careless turn of mind; who cannot thoroughly concentrate his thoughts upon the manner in which he is to accomplish the descent. There is no pause in the work for consideration; if at the very moment the moving stage meets the fixed stage you do not step from the one to the other, you lose your turn. This will bring necessarily two men upon the same stage at one time, where there is not room for more than one, and the chances of danger are increased. Again, if you do not remember to keep yourself perfectly upright, whilst on the fixed stage; if, as I did, you allow a stage to go down without you; the stage above may come down upon the head or back bent forward—and you will be nowhere.

A few minutes before two we went to the mouth of the shaft, where the men were sitting about on the ground, waiting for the hour to strike. They looked, for the most part, morally and physically unhealthy, their faces low caste and forbidding. Their dress consisted of a loose shirt and a pair of trousers, red, like the earth they worked in. One man said to another in my hearing that "if anyone would give them a barrel of ale it was precious little work they'd do that afternoon." This was precisely what they looked: idle, good-for-nothing, vagabondish. But of their terribly pale, unhealthy looking faces, a great deal must be attributed to their underground work.

At two o'clock the engine began to work, and the pole or ladder to

move up and down. It was a curious sensation to picture this pole stretched far away fifteen hundred feet into the earth ; that so far down there were men dependent upon this alone for bringing them back to life and light. Still more curious, when, as each man took his turn and disappeared—each armed with a candle stuck on his cap in a bit of clay, and small barrel of water slung round his shoulders, just as a vivandière slings hers when following the regiment—to feel that, though unseen, one hundred and twenty men were moving simultaneously on and off the ladder as it progressed upwards and downwards.

When the last man had disappeared I took my turn. Twice I progressed half a dozen stages down. The first time my hat was knocked in ; the second I had nearly fared more seriously. Feeling this no place for me, I quickly returned to the surface, happy to have escaped with nothing worse than a damaged hat : persuaded that no man ought to



THE PELE ROCK.

venture down without a good deal of practice in so dangerous an experiment. My love of exploring for the time being abated ; and the quiet drive home, whilst chewing the cud of reflection ; pondering over the dangers we continually run into, and from which we are continually preserved by our All-Merciful Father : was perhaps a drive of greater pleasure than had been the drive of the early morning.

There yet remained the Scilly Islands to be visited. When I found that Z. was proof against all persuasions to accompany me, I almost gave up the idea. The fatigue of the journey would be too much for him. If he could quietly drive over in his own carriage, it would be a very different matter. The horrors of the Atlantic swell ; the uncertainty of the boat ; the possibility of being detained on the Islands, once there, by stress of weather, for a week or ten days ; the task of tramping the islands on foot, and getting worn out and knocked up for a month : all these reasons were arguments too powerful to be over-ruled.

"But go you," said Z. "Neglect an opportunity and often it never returns. Go; and peace be with you. Leave me to quietness and my chimney corner. Give the reins to enjoyment; see all that is to be seen; but like the good Christian you ought to be, come back in time for Sunday."

"The matter was soon settled, and I made up my mind to a visit of solitary grandeur. But at the last moment, two ladies, friends of Z., who had never seen the Scilly Islands and wished to do so, agreed to accompany me.

At seven o'clock, one bright morning, we started from Falmouth. No later train would land us at Penzance in time for the boat. At Truro we changed trains, and filled up the spare hour in driving about the town, which apparently offered no objects of interest beyond that of a small country place. The shops were most of them closed, though past eight o'clock; and we, who this morning, at least, could pride ourselves upon our early rising, sat in judgment, and pronounced it, for Truro, an ominous sign of the times.

My companions had never seen St. Michael's Mount, and as we steamed towards Penzance, we consulted, and agreed to alight at Marazion, visit the Mount, lunch at twelve at Thomas's Hotel, and drive into Penzance in time for the boat to Scilly. And here I must observe, in parenthesis, that never were three travellers more delightfully d'accord than were we; throughout the journey out and home. If all ladies were as amiable as were those who placed themselves under my protection, women in general would prove pleasanter travelling companions than some of the sterner sex I have known.

A short drive from Marazion station brought us to the little town. The tide was out, and enabled us to walk over to the Mount, and this, perhaps, proved the greatest part of the fun. Picking our way over slippery stones: splashing into quicksand; a false step upon a bunch of slimy seaweed, giving rise to startling contortions to regain equilibrium; now a full stop on the part of A., and a wonder where in the world the next step was to be taken: now a scream and a look of horror from B., as a dainty foot plunged unsuspiciously into a hidden, treacherous pool.

At last we landed high, but scarcely dry, upon the Mount. Passing the cottages at its base, we gradually made the circuit of the rock, which appeared more picturesque to-day in the sunshine than it had in the clouds of a previous visit. But there was not time, and scarcely, I think, inclination for the toilsome ascent to the Abbey. "Time and tide wait for no man": and though the Scilly Islands boat, as we found, will wait any amount of time for fish or mailbags, it so far carries out the proverb, that, these once on board, it steams off, coûte qui coûte, without the slightest regard to dilatory passengers. With the ardour of ancient pilgrims, A. and B. set out on the slippery return journey. We found Thomas's as uninviting without, as comfortable within, as here-

tofore. Before one o'clock an open fly from the inn drove us into Penzance, where the steamer was making ready for sea.

It was a small, but not uncomfortable boat, with a very good cabin for those who might not feel well enough to remain on deck. We started at half-past two: "Not only with mackerel on board," as A. quaintly observed, looking upwards, "but with a mackerel sky."

As we steamed out of the harbour a late passenger frantically and hysterically shouted and gesticulated to the captain to put back, or allow him to join by means of a boat. He might as well have appealed to the Sphinx, or endeavoured to change the course of the sun, or alter the words of a Delphic oracle. The skipper was proof against bribes, threats, and argument; and we went on our way.

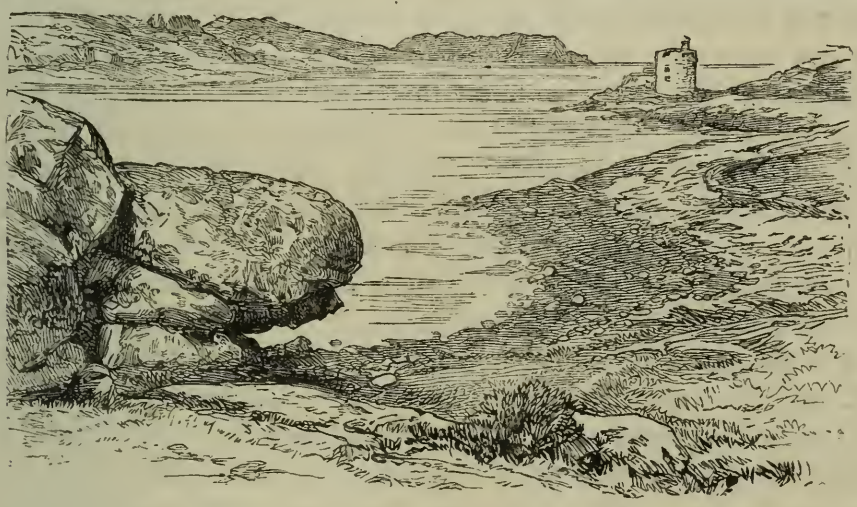
LAND'S END, SHOWING "THE FIRST AND THE LAST HOUSE IN ENGLAND."

It was a bright, pleasant afternoon. But the swell upon the water produced a strong motion which proved too much for A.'s powers of endurance. She endeavoured to brave it out, first in a sitting, then in a recumbent position; became more and more laconic in her remarks; less and less observant of the beautiful coast; drenched herself inwardly with nux vomica, and outwardly with eau-de-Cologne; and at last gave up the struggle, and disappeared into the cabin; to be seen no more until we were very close upon our destination.

Nux was B.'s remedy for sea-sickness, and whether it was following her advice and example by taking it at regular intervals: or whether the charms of her conversation drove all other thoughts away, certain it is

that I never made a short sea voyage more agreeably. The steward contrived us a seat on the poop, or housedeck; or whatever the elevated structure might be called; and with our backs against the funnel, we drove before the wind, in full view of the ocean, the coast to our right hand.

The steamer did not go very near the shore, so that small objects were not visible to the eye; but we had a far better view and a far better conception of the rugged outline, than I had gained in a previous walking expedition. The gradual departure from Penzance was exceedingly pretty, as we passed the romantic Mousehole and Newlyn, which sloped down to the water's edge, in a combe: said to have been, in the old days, a great place for smugglers. As we rounded this point, the long line of the cliff stretching towards the Land's End opened to us, and gradually as we went on, the chief points, such as the Logan Rock, Swan Pyg, and Tol Pedn Penwith, stood out conspicuously.



GRIMSBY CHANNEL, CROMWELL TOWER.

The rocks detached from the cliff jutted boldly into the water, and here, as on land, added much to the beauty of the scene. We passed the Pele Rock, which seems to form a small island of its own; passed the Land's End, with a good view of the little house on the top, which calls itself "The first house and the last house in England," and then, steering more to the left, we fairly bid adieu to the coast, and turned our faces towards the Scilly Islands.

These for a long time were invisible. Every one knows how slowly you seem to recede from land after the boat has left the shore; how you look back time after time, and still the coast is looming upon you. How on the other hand, the opposite coast comes very gradually into sight, growing from one speck into two, and from two to four, until you think you will never reach the wished for harbour.

"I am certain," said I to the old skipper, who made himself very good-natured, and won the affections of the ladies in his anxiety for

their welfare, "I am quite certain we are making small progress. Your engines are only at half speed."

"Full speed," returned the skipper lustily. "Full speed, sir. And very good speed too. Look forward; don't look back; nothing at sea so deceptive as distance."

Presently he took great pains to point out, far away, a narrow black line. For a long time he pointed in vain. At length, thin, dark streaks became detached from the horizon, and presently resolved themselves into what looked like hilly country. The sea around was glorious. There were no waves, but the swell came rolling along; now riding the boat aloft, now letting her down gently into a hollow. To us who were well it was very grand and enjoyable.

The approach to the islands was a sight almost of surpassing beauty, to which the westering sun, with its gold pencil, no doubt greatly added. The beauty of form and grouping of the islands: the manner in which they rise up, solitary and alone, to break the monotony of that wide expanse of ocean; the feeling of loneliness and isolation that creeps upon you as you first gaze upon this small world, detached from the great world, and possessed of an individuality entirely its own. The gorgeous colours of the water plashing around the rocks, as we entered the group, partly gained doubtless from the lights and shades of the land: the barrenness of the islands that first came into sight; not a house to be seen, not a living man or woman; the silence of the grave reigning, and a yet deeper feeling of isolation creeping over you than a graveyard gives; silence broken only by the plaint of the sea-gull, and the cry of the flying cormorant, and the note of the razor-bill perched on some rocky point: the strange diversity of form of the islands, but all beautiful, with a beauty, as I have said, heightened by the lowering sun. This first view alone was worth more trouble and early rising than it had cost us. If we gained no other reward, this alone would suffice. We had been nearly five hours crossing. This was my first impression of the Scilly Islands, and nothing in the islands themselves subsequently came up to it.

We passed through the first rocks, and steered for the principal island—St. Mary's, of which the harbour was yet invisible. A sudden turn brought this into sight, together with a small crowd of people on the pier. The arrival of the boat was, no doubt, the event of the day in this out-of-the-world, uneventful island. Now that we were in smooth water A. came up on deck, and was just well enough to assure us of her bitter repentance for having ventured out to sea.

C. W. W.

(*To be concluded.*)

# SEEDS OF DISCORD.

IT would take a far journey and a long summer's day, to find a more united and loving couple than Monsieur and Madame Dufour. They had been married five years, and no breeze had ever arisen to disturb the domestic atmosphere. One child had blessed their union, the apple of his father's eye, and the delight of his mother's heart. Indeed, the little Achille would have been in danger of being spoilt, had it been possible to spoil the child of such parents as Monsieur and Madame Dufour.

It is almost needless to say that the family Dufour—father, mother, and son—were popular amongst their neighbours. The happy and well-to-do seldom make themselves unpleasant; and both Monsieur and Madame Dufour were—as far as their means would allow—hospitable and open-handed.

Monsieur Dufour kept a linendraper's shop in a small town in Normandy, and his spouse added to the resources of the household by occasionally making up materials purchased of her husband. A small back room had been appropriated to her use as a workroom, and there she cheerfully plied her needle, talking the while in cooing maternal accents to the little Achille, or singing snatches of the chansons of her province in very gaiety of heart. The distant sound of his wife's voice, and his child's laughter, cheered the soul of Monsieur Dufour, as he blandly and smilingly served his numerous customers, or gathered the news of the day to retail to his dearly loved Adèle after business hours. Thus year after year passed with this worthy pair, in industry and contentment.

A proud man was Monsieur Dufour on fête days and Sundays, when he issued forth in shining boots, and well fitting gloves, his comely wife all smiles and dimples on his arm, and holding by the other hand, his son in holiday suit, on his way to the pleasure gardens just outside the town. There, chatting sociably with neighbours and friends, the hours passed pleasantly. Or when winter weather necessitated in-door amusements, a game at dominoes, or a visit to the theatre, helped to wile away the gloomy months, till spring invited the inhabitants of the little town out of doors again.

It happened to be winter time, and Madame Dufour had to keep a fire in the stove of her workroom. This room had a north aspect, and looked on to a small flagged courtyard into which the kitchen opened, Madame Dufour kept no regular servant, only employing a woman to come in each morning to do the roughest part of the work, while she herself was otherwise engaged. In the kitchen, which was as bright and cosy a room as heart could wish, Monsieur and Madame Dufour took their meals, and generally sat in an evening.

One day, as Madame Dufour had just lifted the lid, to try if the ingredients of the pot-au-feu were properly mingled, her husband came into the kitchen. In his hand he held a paper bag tied with string, carefully knotted.

"See here," he said; "some one has left this parcel in the shop. We must take care of it till it is inquired for."

"I wonder what it contains," said Madame Dufour, taking the parcel in her hand. "It feels as if it were full of small beads. Perhaps pearls! who knows?"

"Never mind what it contains," replied the discreet Monsieur Dufour; "only put it in a safe place where it will keep dry, chère amie."

"I will put it on the shelf behind my stove," answered the lady; "and certainly, as you say, it is no concern of ours what there is in it."

Monsieur Dufour lingered a moment; inhaling the savoury fumes of the pot-au-feu.

"How good that smells," he said; "certainly, you are an admirable cook, Adèle."

"You are so easily pleased, that is one thing, Florian," the lady returned, showing her white, even teeth in a beaming smile. "One does one's best, when one is sure of giving pleasure."

"Ah! and an omelette!" cried Monsieur Dufour, peeping into a basin in which stood the delicate preparation ready for the fritter-pan. "You always remember what I like, Adèle."

"Toujours, toujours!" said the bright little woman. "Is it not the pleasure of my life, to please my good Florian?"

"Where is Achille?" asked the father.

"Le bel enfant! He is with Madame Brun. The neighbours are always glad to have him," replied Madame Dufour, with motherly pride.

"You have brought him up well, Adèle," said Monsieur approvingly.

"Ah! If he might only grow up as good a man as his father, all my cares would be rewarded," responded Madame.

Monsieur Dufour, hearing the entrance of a customer, turned towards the shop. He glanced back, however, as he left the kitchen, and well he might. The clean scoured floor, with the piece of bright-coloured carpet before the stove: the rows of crockery on the shelves; the shining brass pans; Fanchon and Minette—a white poodle and a large Persian cat—sleeping in amicable proximity on the rug; and more than all, Adèle's trim figure, her bright earrings, and brighter eyes gleaming as she bent over the stove, her dark hair smoothed away under a white cap, her face radiant with health and happiness. Was it not a picture to make Monsieur Dufour bless his stars, inwardly confessing himself a fortunate man?

Madame Dufour, afraid of forgetting the parcel, took it up, and going to her workroom, placed it at once on the shelf she had mentioned, moving a box, so as to put it nearer the warmth of the stove. She then, seeing that the fire was out, closed the door after her, and returned to the kitchen. In the evening Monsieur and Madame Dufour went to a neighbouring café, taking Achille and Fanchon with them; the parcel was forgotten, and as it was not inquired for during the afternoon, the subject did not recur to them.

The following morning, Madame Dufour sat down to her work as usual. The stove had been lighted early, and an agreeable warmth diffused itself through the room. She had been making up an evening dress for one of her best customers. Only the trimming had to be completed. But Madame's fingers seemed to have lost their accustomed skill. She pulled and twisted the ribbon, in vain endeavours to please herself. She felt nervous and irritable.

"It must be the fault of the ribbon," she said to herself. "I wonder how Florian can buy such stuff."

Achille had been amusing himself with a wooden horse. It fell, and one of the wheels came off. It would no longer go. Achille sat down on the ground, and began to roar. Madame Dufour jumped up, and seizing the child by the arm, gave him a good shaking.

"If you are not quiet this instant, I'll box your ears, you little toad!" she exclaimed angrily. "Do you think I haven't enough to vex me without you?"

At the unusual sounds of crying and scolding, Monsieur Dufour came hurrying from the shop. "Why, maman, what has Achille done?" he questioned, as he stood on the threshold; but as he advanced into the room, his cheeks flushed, his brow contracted. "What do you mean, Madame, by treating the child in that manner?" he cried, raising his voice wrathfully.

"I shall treat the child as I choose, without asking your permission," his wife retorted, with flashing eyes. "You spoil him. He's unbearable!"

"You'll treat him as you choose, will you?" replied Monsieur Dufour loudly. "I'd have you to know that I'm master here, and things shall be as I choose. You've had too much of your own way, madame."

"What have I of my own way?" cried Adèle sharply. "Don't I slave from morning to night, and small thanks I get for it. And look here," she continued, holding out a piece of the crumpled ribbon, "what rubbish is this? Am I to waste my time because you sell bad goods?"

"I sell bad goods!" shouted Monsieur Dufour, enraged. "You're a fool, Madame Dufour. You don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, I don't, don't I? If I'm a fool, I know a greater, that's one comfort!" screamed Adèle.

Fortunately at this juncture, Monsieur Dufour was summoned to the shop. Achille had already made his escape. By-and-by Madame Dufour went into the kitchen to see after the substantial mid-day meal. After awhile she drew a long breath, passing her hand across her forehead.

"What can have been the matter with me?" she said to herself. "What was I so angry about? I'm sure I can't think!"

Achille, who was sitting on the rug beside Minette, looked up timidly.

"Was maman cross?" she cried, catching the child up in her arms. "Never mind then, maman did not mean it. See here, mon petit bonheur, here's a rosy-cheeked apple, and papa will mend his horse. Kiss mamma, and then run and tell papa we are ready."

Monsieur Dufour came in, looking rather sheepish. Adèle's cheeks were paler than usual, and tears stood in her bright black eyes.

"I can't think what came over me this morning," she began, as her husband seated himself. "I hope you'll forgive me, Florian."

"It was all my fault," replied Monsieur Dufour; "I really don't know that I ever was in a passion before, and for nothing!" he added, contemplatively rubbing his nose with his finger.

"No, it was not your fault, Florian," returned Adèle. "I ought not to have been cross with Achille; and I ought not to have said what I did about the ribbon. It is very nice ribbon. It was all my stupidity."

"No, no," replied Monsieur Dufour. "What it was all about I cannot tell, but it shall never happen again."

"Never, never!" cried his wife. "To think that I could have been unkind to this dear child, and to my Florian who is always so good!" The tears once more started to her eyes as she spoke.

"And to think that I should have felt angry with my precious Adèle! Embrace me, chère amie!" Monsieur Dufour exclaimed, drawing his wife towards him, and kissing the tears from her cheek. "Now let us forget it, and talk about something else."

Soon after this, Madame Dufour, leaving Margot to clear away, returned to her workroom to finish trimming the dress that was to be sent home that evening. She had not sat long before her head began to throb, and all the former nervous, irritable feelings of the morning returned in double force.

"Certainly Achille was very tiresome this morning, and Monsieur Dufour had no right to speak to me as he did. I won't put up with it another time," she muttered, as with trembling fingers, she made a vain attempt to thread her needle.

"Come in!" she cried, as a knock came to the door of the room.

"Oh, neighbour Brun, is that you?" she added, as a woman in the costume of the lower middle class of provincial Normandy made her appearance.

"I have just run in to see if it is convenient to you to lend me your fritter-pan, Madame Dufour," she said, advancing.

"Well, I don't know that it is convenient," replied Adèle, in a sulky tone. "It has just been cleaned and hung up."

"But I would return it clean this evening," returned Madame Brun, surprised at the unaccustomed manner of receiving her request.

"I don't know that you would; not what I call clean," said Adèle.

"Not what you call clean, indeed!" exclaimed Madame Brun, who had approached the stove. "I'd have you to know that I understand cleaning my utensils as well as you do, madame," she added, setting her arms a-kimbo.

"I don't know that you can have the fritter-pan, whether or no," said Madame Dufour, crossly. "People are always bothering me to lend this and that. I wonder why they can't get things of their own!"

"Well, you needn't be ill-natured about it, neighbour," was the answer.

"And you needn't be impertinent, Madame Brun; I'm not asking you for anything."

"Impertinent indeed!" cried Madame Brun, flaming up. "Some folks think themselves grand because they show off on a Sunday in a fine bonnet, instead of keeping to the cap that was good enough for their mothers and grandmothers. But please to remember that my cousin's wife is sister to the mayor of the arrondissement, Madame Dufour."

"I don't care that for your cousin, or for the mayor either," retorted Adèle, snapping her fingers in her companion's face. "If I wear a bonnet, it's because my husband can pay for it."

"That's more than your father could, or did, by all accounts," said Madame Brun, spitefully.

"I'll not be taunted by a pack of lies in my own house," screamed Madame Dufour, jumping up from her seat in a fury. "You're nothing but a mischief-maker, Madame Brun."

"And I'm not going to stand here to be called names!" cried the other. "Good-bye, Madame! I wish you a better temper!" So saying, she bounced out of the room, slamming the door after her.

Madame Dufour's temples throbbed painfully; she felt a choking in her throat; her hands shook so that she could not get on with her work. Hastily throwing down the materials, she left the room, and, crossing the kitchen, stood awhile in the frosty air at the open door. As the breeze fanned her brow, she drew a long breath of relief.

"What have I been saying to that good Madame Brun," she thought,

after she had stood a few minutes. "I wonder what possessed me to refuse her the loan of my fritter-pan." She looked towards the wall where it hung. "I've a great mind to take it in to her. *Ciel!* how my head still aches!"

She reached down the pan, and, wrapping a shawl round her shoulders, proceeded next door.

"I have come to say that I hope you won't think anything of what passed just now, neighbour," she began, as she entered the kitchen where Madame Brun was busy ironing. "I can't imagine what came over me! Here's the pan; you're quite welcome to it; I don't in the least want it any more to-day."

Madame Brun stood looking at her friend, her iron suspended in the air. "And I don't know what came over me, neighbour Dufour," she said at last. "I ought to have seen that you had a headache, or that something had worried you. I wouldn't have troubled you for the world!"

"But it was no trouble," asserted Adèle. "And pray you not think of cleaning the pan as you are busy; Margot has nothing else to do. I'm sure your tins look beautiful!" she added, casting a look round the kitchen.

"Not quite equal to yours though," replied Madame Brun. "I hope you won't be offended at what I said about the bonnet," she continued. "I can't imagine what induced me to speak as I did. I'm sure I often remark to Pièrre, how nice that dear Madame Dufour looks, and green is so becoming to you."

"And you know, I have always felt the greatest respect for *Monsieur le Maire*, and for your cousin too," said Adèle.

"And for my part, I never believed what was said about your father not paying his debts—never a word," responded the neighbour.

"I'm sure you did not, Madame Brun."

"I would rather bite my tongue out than vex so good a neighbour," said Madame Brun, a quiver in her voice.

"And I would rather go barefoot than quarrel with you," said Adèle, heartily. "So kind as you are to little Achille."

"Achille is a little angel!" cried Madame Brun, enthusiastically.

"You are all goodness to say so," replied Madame Dufour.

Then the two friends embraced; and Adèle, feeling her head relieved, hastened back to her work.

She had been but a short time seated again, when Achille came running to announce Monsieur le Curé.

"Ask his reverence to walk in," she said. "What does he want now, I wonder?" she muttered to herself. "There's no end of worry. Good afternoon, monsieur," she continued, rising from her seat as the Curé entered, but scarcely lifting her eyes. "Please to take a chair, Monsieur le Curé."

"I hope I see you well, Madame Dufour," said the worthy man, taking the proffered chair, and laying his broad-brimmed hat on another. "Your little boy grows apace," he added, patting Achille's curly head. "I hope he is a good boy, and learns his catechism."

"He never learns anything," replied the mother shortly.

"Dear me! But that is a pity, Madame Dufour."

"I suppose you mean to say it is my fault! Of course, everything is my fault!" exclaimed Adèle, irritably.

"Madame, it is the duty of parents to instruct their children in the doctrines of our Holy Church," replied the Curé, sternly. "I do not suppose you will call that in question, Madame Dufour."

"I suppose you didn't come here to tell me that," said Adèle.

"No. I called upon you on another matter, but I am afraid my visit is ill-timed," said the Curé, taking up his hat, while the colour rose to his cheeks.

"I can't see that it signifies whether it is or not," replied Madame Dufour.

"Madame, I am not accustomed to be spoken to in that tone," returned the Curé, severely.

"I suppose people may speak in what tone they like, Monsieur le Curé," returned the lady, snappishly. "If you come here to dictate to me, you may as well save your breath."

"Really, madame, this is insufferable!" exclaimed his reverence, rising. "I came on a friendly errand, and I am a man of peace; but I must say I consider your conduct disrespectful, unworthy, and—and—insolent in the extreme," he continued, his choler gaining strength at each epithet.

"I don't care what you consider," said Adèle.

"Monsieur Dufour shall be informed of this!" exclaimed the Curé, his voice trembling with anger. "I wish you a good day, madame."

Puffing out his cheeks in a fume, and rapping his stick on the floor, the Curé took his departure, leaving his errand untold; stopping, however, to speak to the master of the house in the shop as he went out. Monsieur Dufour immediately came into his wife's room.

"Why, Adèle," he said, "whatever have you been saying to Monsieur le Curé?"

"I don't see that it's anything to you what I have been saying," snapped his wife.

"It isn't, isn't it?" he exclaimed, coming up to where she sat, the unfinished trimming still in her fingers. "But I'll let you know it is something to me! Sacré!" he cried, with a sounding oath, "are my friends to be insulted by you, and I'm to stand by like a post?" Again he swore. "If you don't mend your manners, I'll let you see the difference, madame."

"My manners, indeed! I wouldn't swear, if I talked about manners.

It's a burning shame for Achille to hear the way in which you allow yourself to speak, Monsieur Dufour."

"Swear! you'd make all the saints in the calendar swear," retorted her husband. "One thing, however, I've determined upon; you shall apologize to Monsieur le Curé, and that before night comes."

"I shall do no such thing," answered Adèle.

"You won't? You dare to say that before my face?" cried the exasperated Monsieur Dufour.

"No, I won't. That's flat," replied Adèle.

Monsieur Dufour, in a fury lifted his hand, as if to strike his wife, who stood before him with angry eyes, and crimson cheeks; but before the blow descended, a sharp voice was heard at the door.

"Eh, eh, good people—what's the matter?" said a dapper little man, bustling into the room.

"Matter enough ——" Monsieur Dufour began; but the little man, without listening to him, began sniffing the air of the room.

"Umph, umph—what have we got here? It's somewhere about your stove, madame," he said.

"What's about my stove? What's amiss with my stove, I should like to know, Dr. Médard?" asked Adèle, retreating a few steps.

"Pardon; I'm getting angry. It's here somewhere," said the doctor. "What's in that parcel, madame?"

"I don't know," replied Madame Dufour, who began to cool down a little.

"Then, we will see, with your leave, or without either," said the doctor. He possessed himself of the parcel, and taking up Madame Dufour's scissors, cut the string. Monsieur Dufour, putting his hand up to his head, hurried out of the room.

"Ah, ah, I thought as much! *graines de jusquiame!*" cried Dr. Médard, making a great many r's out of one. Then, without further parley, he threw open the window, and flung the parcel into the courtyard.

"Va!" he exclaimed, closing the fingers of his right hand, and then throwing them rapidly open; "do you feel better, madame?"

"I—I think I do; but my head aches to distraction," replied Adèle.

"Oh, exactly," said the doctor, taking a pinch of snuff, "and you feel a choking in your throat, as if you wanted to scream, or cry?"

"Yes—oh yes! and ——" but here the detail of symptoms was interrupted by a yell and a squall from the courtyard. Madame Dufour ran to the window.

"Florian! Florian!" she screamed, "Fanchon and Minette have flown at each other; they never did such a thing before. Haste! haste! They will kill each other, and Achille will break his heart!"

Monsieur Dufour ran to the rescue, at his wife's voice. With a

strenuous kick he sent Fanchon howling to the other side of the court; while Minette, seeking safety on the wall, stood with back uplifted and tail like a bottle-brush, spitting with might and main.

A cry from Adèle. "Sauve toi, chère ami! Fanchon will fly at you!"

Out dashed the little doctor, while Monsieur Dufour sprang into the open door of the wood-cellar.

Seizing the bag of seeds, that lay on the ground where he had thrown it, the doctor ran into the kitchen, and, holding a handkerchief tight over his mouth and nose, he thrust it into the stove. A crackling noise, a puff of smoke, and the poisonous henbane seeds were consumed.

Peace reigned once more in the household of Monsieur Dufour, and the momentary disturbance was only remembered with wonder. Madame Dufour sang at her work again, and Monsieur Dufour has never been heard to swear again from that day to this. The seeds of discord were never inquired after.

## ONWARDS.

LET me go on!
I know the way behind me seemeth fair,
I know the sun shone brightly, warmly there.
And on before, lieth a broad, dim meadow;
And what awaits me there is draped in shadow.
And yet I would press on.

Not back, but on!
I know the past was full of pleasant things;
The song of birds, the rustle of their wings.
I know the future holds no sounds of singing,
No sounds of laughter, or of glad tones ringing.
And yet I would go on.

Steadily on!
What though the past was a smooth, even road;
What though the present holds no heavy load,
And all the future way is rough and hilly,
Whose snows are endless, and whose winds are chilly.
But yet I would keep on.

Ay up, and on!
I hate this even, uneventful life;
Give me the scenes of labour, and of strife.
My path is rugged, but it is ascending,
And I shall stand exalted at the ending.
And so I will press on.

# THE DIAMOND BRACELET.

*By the Author of* "EAST LYNNE."

A STORY RE-TOLD.

THE afternoon of a hot June day was drawing towards evening, and the great world of London—for it was the height of the season—were beginning to think of dinner. In a well-furnished dressing-room, the windows being open for air, and the blinds drawn down to exclude the sun, stood a lady, whose maid was giving the last touch to her rich attire. It was Lady Sarah Hope.

"What bracelets, my lady?" asked the maid, taking a small bunch of keys from her pocket.

"Not any, now: it is so very hot. Alice," added Lady Sarah, turning to a young lady, who was leaning back on a sofa, "will you put all my bracelets out for me against I come up. I will decide then."

"*I* put them out, Lady Sarah?" returned Miss Seaton.

"If you will be so kind. Hughes, give the key to Miss Seaton."

Lady Sarah left the room, and the maid, Hughes, began taking one of the small keys off the ring. "I have leave to go out, miss," she explained, "which is the reason why my lady has asked you to see to her bracelets. My mother is not well, and wants to speak to me. This is the key, miss."

As Miss Seaton took it, Lady Sarah reappeared at the door. "Alice, you may as well bring the bracelet-box down to the back drawing-room," she said. "I shall not care to come up here after dinner: we shall be late as it is."

"What's that about a bracelet-box?" inquired a pretty-looking girl, who had come swiftly out of another apartment.

"Lady Sarah wishes me to bring her bracelets down to the drawing-room, that she may choose which to put on. It was too hot to wear them to dine in," she said.

"Are you not coming in to dinner to-day, Alice?"

"No. I walked out, and it has tired me, as usual. I have had some tea instead."

"I would not be you for all the world, Alice! To possess so little capability of enjoying life."

"Yet, if you were as I am, weak in health and strength, your lot would have been so soothed to you, that you would not repine at or regret it."

"You mean I should be content," laughed the young lady. "Well, there is nothing like contentment, the sages tell us. One of my detestable schoolroom copies used to be 'Contentment is happiness.'"

"I can hear the dinner being taken in," said Alice: "you will be late in the drawing-room."

Lady Frances Chenevix turned away to fly down the stairs. Her light, rounded form, her elastic step, all telling of health and enjoyment, presented a marked contrast to that of Alice Seaton. Alice's face was indeed strangely beautiful, almost too refined and delicate for the wear and tear of common life, but her figure was weak and stooping, and her gait feeble. Of exceedingly good family, she had been suddenly thrown from her natural position of wealth and comfort to comparative poverty, and had found refuge as "companion" to Lady Sarah Hope.

Colonel Hope was a thin, spare man, with sharp brown eyes and sharp features; looking so shrunk and short, that his friends jokingly told him he must have been smuggled into the army under height; unless he had since been growing downwards. No stranger could have believed him at ease in his circumstances, any more than they would have believed him a colonel who had seen hard service in India, for his clothes were frequently threadbare. A black ribbon supplied the place of a gold chain as guard to his watch, and a blue, tin-looking thing of a galvanised ring did duty for any other ring on his finger. Yet he was rich; of fabulous riches, people said; but he was of a close disposition, especially as regarded his personal outlay. In his home and to his wife he was liberal. They had been married several years, but had no children, and his large property was not entailed: it was believed that his nephew, Gerard Hope, would inherit it, but some dispute had recently occurred between uncle and nephew, and Gerard had been turned from the house. Lady Frances Chenevix, the sister of Lady Sarah, but considerably younger, had been paying them an eight months' visit in the country, and had now come up to town with them.

Alice Seaton lay on the sofa for half an hour; and then, taking the bracelet-box in her hands, descended to the drawing-rooms. It was intensely hot; a sultry, breathless heat; and Alice threw open the back window. Which in truth made it hotter, for the sun gleamed right athwart the leads which stretched themselves beyond the windows over the outbuildings at the back of the row of houses.

She sat down near this back window, and began to put out some of the bracelets on the table before it. They were rare and rich: of plain gold, of silver, of pearl, of precious stones. One of them was of gold links studded with diamonds; it was very valuable, and had been the present of Colonel Hope to his wife on her recent birthday. Another diamond bracelet was there, but it was not so beautiful or so costly as this. When her task was done, Miss Seaton passed into the front drawing-room, and threw up one of its large windows. Still there was no air in the room.

As she stood at it, a handsome young man, tall and powerful, who was walking on the opposite side of the street, caught her eye. He nodded, hesitated, and then crossed the street as if to enter.

"It is Gerard!" uttered Alice, under her breath. "Can he be coming here?" She walked away from the window hastily, and sat down by the bedecked table in the other room.

"Just as I supposed!" exclaimed Gerard Hope, entering, and advancing to Alice with stealthy steps. "When I saw you at the window, the thought struck me that you were alone here, and they at dinner. Thomas happened to be airing himself at the door, so I crossed over, and asked him; and came up. How are you, Alice?"

"Have you come to dinner?" inquired Alice, speaking at random, and angry at her own agitation.

"*I* come to dinner!" repeated Mr. Hope. "Why, you know they'd as soon sit down with the renowned Mr. Ketch."

"Indeed I know nothing about it. I was hoping that you and the colonel might have been reconciled. Why did you come in? Thomas may tell them."

"No, he won't. I told him not to. Alice, the idea of your never coming up till June! some whim of Lady Sarah's, I suppose. Two or three times a week for the last month have I been marching past his house, wondering when it was going to show signs of life. Is Frances here still?"

"Oh yes. She is going to remain some time."

"To make up for——Alice, was it not a shame to turn me out?"

"I was extremely sorry for what happened, Mr. Hope, but I knew nothing of the details. Lady Sarah said you had displeased the colonel, and after that she never mentioned your name."

"What a show of smart things you have here, Alice! Are you going to set up a bazaar?"

"They are Lady Sarah's bracelets."

"So they are, I see! This is a gem," added Mr. Hope, taking up the fine diamond bracelet already mentioned. "I don't remember this one."

"It is new. The colonel has just given it to her."

"What did it cost?"

Alice Seaton laughed. "Do you think I am likely to know? I question if Lady Sarah heard, herself."

"It never cost a farthing less than two hundred guineas," mused Mr. Hope, turning the bracelet in various directions that its rich diamonds might give out their gleaming light. "I wish it was mine."

"What should you do with it?" laughed Alice.

"Spout it."

"I do not understand," returned Alice. She really did not.

"I beg your pardon, Alice. I was thinking of the colloquial lingo familiarly applied to such transactions, instead of to whom I was talking. I mean raise money upon it."

"Oh, Mr. Hope."

"Alice, that's twice you have called me 'Mr. Hope.' I thought I was 'Gerard' to you before I went away."

"Time has elapsed since then; and you seem more like a stranger again," returned Alice, a flush rising to her sensitive face. "But you spoke of raising money: I hope you are not in temporary embarrassment."

"A jolly good thing for me if it turns out only temporary," he rejoined. "Look at my position! Debts hanging over my head—for you may be sure, Alice, all young men, with a limited allowance and large expectations, contract debts—and thrust out of my uncle's home with just the loose cash I had in my pockets, and my clothes sent packing after me."

"Has the colonel stopped your allowance?"

Mr. Hope laid down the bracelet from whence he had taken it, before he replied.

"He stopped it then: and I have not had a shilling since, except from my own resources. I first went upon tick; then I disposed of my watch and chain and all my other little matters of value: and now I am upon tick again."

Alice did not answer.

"Perhaps you don't understand these free terms, Alice," he said, looking fondly at her, "and I hope you may never have occasion to. Frances would: she has lived in their atmosphere."

"Yes, I know what an embarrassed man the Earl is. But I am grieved to hear about yourself. Is the colonel implacable? What was the cause of the quarrel?"

"You know I was to be his heir. Even if children had come to him, he had undertaken amply to provide for me. Last Christmas he suddenly sent for me, and told me it was his pleasure and Lady Sarah's that I should take up my abode with them. So I did take it up, glad to get into such good quarters; and stopped there, like an innocent, unsuspicious lamb, until—when was it, Alice?—April. Then the plot came out."

"The plot?" exclaimed Miss Seaton.

"It was nothing less. They had fixed upon a wife for me; and I was ordered to hold myself in readiness to marry her at any given moment."

"Who was it?" inquired Alice, in a low tone, as she bent her head over the bracelets.

"Never mind," laughed Mr. Hope; "it wasn't you. I said I would not have her; and they both, he and Lady Sarah, pulled me and my want of taste to pieces, assuring me I was a monster of ingratitude. It provoked me into confessing that I liked somebody else better. And then the colonel turned me out."

Alice looked her sorrow, but she did not express it.

"And since then I have been having a fight with my creditors, putting them off with fair words and promises. But they have grown incredulous, and it has come to dodging. In favour with my uncle, and his acknowledged heir, they would have given me unlimited time and credit, but the breach between us is known, and it makes all the difference. With the value of that at my disposal"—nodding at the bracelet—"I should stop some pressing personal trifles and go on again for a while. So you see, Alice, a diamond bracelet may be of use even to a gentleman, should some genial fortune drop one into his hands."

"I sympathise with you very much," said Alice, "and I would I had it in my power to aid you."

"Thank you for your kind wishes; I know they are genuine. When my uncle sees the name of Gerard Hope figuring in the insolvent list, or amongst the outlaws, he——Hark! Can they be coming up from dinner?"

"Scarcely yet," said Alice, starting up simultaneously with himself, and listening. "But they will not sit long to-day, because they are going to the opera. Gerard, they must not find you here."

"It might get you turned out as well as myself! No, not if I can help it. Alice!"—suddenly laying his hands upon her shoulders, and gazing down into her eyes—"do you know who it was I had learnt to love, instead of—of the other?"

She gasped for breath, and her colour went and came. "No—no, do not tell me, Gerard."

"Why no, I had better not, under present circumstances. But when the good time comes—for all their high-roped indignation must and will blow over—*then I will*; and here's the pledge of it." He bent his head, took one long earnest kiss from her lips; and the next moment was gone.

Agitated almost to sickness, trembling and confused, Alice Seaton stole to look after him, terrified lest he might not escape unseen. She crept partly down the stairs, so as to obtain sight of the hall-door, and make sure that he got out in safety. As Mr. Hope drew it quietly open, there stood a lady just about to knock. She said something to him, and he waved his hand towards the staircase. Alice saw that the visitor was her sister; a lady well married, and moving in the fashionable world. She met her, and took her into the front drawing-room.

"I cannot stay to sit down, Alice; I must make haste back to dress, for I am engaged to three or four places to-night. Neither do I wish to horrify Lady Sarah with a visit at this untoward hour. I had a request to make to you, and thought to catch you in your room before you went in to dinner."

"They are alone, and are dining earlier than usual. I was too tired to appear. What can I do for you?"

"In one word—I am in pressing need of a little money. Can you lend it me?"

"I wish I could," returned Alice; "I am so very sorry. I sent all I had to poor mamma the day before we came to town. It was only twenty-five pounds."

"That would have been of no use to me: I want more. I thought if you had been misering up your salary, you might have had a hundred pounds, or so, by you."

Alice shook her head. "I should be a long while saving up a hundred pounds, even if dear mamma had no wants. But I send to her what I can spare. Do not be in such a hurry," continued Alice, as her sister was moving to the door. "At least wait one minute while I fetch you a letter I received from mamma this morning, in answer to mine. You will like to read it, for it is full of news of the old place. You can take it home with you, Selina."

Alice left her sister standing in the front room, and went up-stairs. But she was more than one minute away, she was three or four, for she could not at first lay her hand upon the letter. When she returned, her sister advanced to her from the back drawing-room, the folding-doors between the two rooms being, as before, wide open.

"What a fine collection of bracelets, Alice!" she exclaimed, as she took the letter. "Are they spread out for show?"

"No," laughed Alice; "Lady Sarah is going to the opera, and will have no time to spare when she comes up from dinner. She asked me to bring them all down, as she had not decided which to wear."

"I like to dress before dinner on my opera nights."

"Oh, so of course does Lady Sarah," returned Alice, as her sister descended the stairs; "but she said it was too hot to dine in bracelets."

"It is fearfully hot. Good-bye, Alice. Don't ring; I will let myself out."

Alice returned to the front room and looked from the window, wondering whether her sister had come in her carriage. No. A trifling evening breeze was arising and beginning to move the curtains about. Gentle as it was, it was grateful, and Alice sat down in it. In a very few minutes the ladies came up from dinner.

"Have you the bracelets, Alice. Oh, I see."

Lady Sarah went into the back room as she spoke, and stood before the table, looking at the bracelets. Alice rose to follow her, when Lady Frances Chenevix caught her by the arm, and began to speak in a covert whisper.

"Who was that at the door just now? It was a visitor's knock. Do you know, Alice, every hour, since we came to town, I have fancied Gerard might be calling. In the country he could not get to us, but here—Was it Gerard?"

"It—it was my sister," carelessly answered Alice. It was not a true answer, for her sister had not knocked, and she did not know who had. But it was the readiest that rose to her lips, and she wished to escape the questioning.

"Only your sister," sighed Frances, turning to the window with a gesture of disappointment.

"Which have you put on?" inquired Alice, going towards Lady Sarah.

"These loose, fancy things; they are the coolest. I really am so hot: the soup was that favourite soup of the colonel's, all capsicums and cayenne, and the wine was hot; there had been a mistake about the ice. Hill trusted to the new man, and he did not understand it; it was all hot together. What the house will be to-night, I dread to think of."

Lady Sarah, whilst she spoke, had been putting the bracelets into the jewel-box, with very little care.

"I had better put them straight," remarked Alice, when she reached the table.

"Do not trouble," returned Lady Sarah, shutting down the lid. "You are looking flushed and feverish, Alice; you were wrong to walk so far to-day. Hughes will set them to rights to-morrow morning; they will do until then. Lock them up, and take possession of the key."

Alice did as she was bid. She locked the case and put the key in her pocket. "Here is the carriage," exclaimed Lady Frances. "Are we to wait for coffee?"

"Coffee in this heat!" retorted Lady Sarah; "it would be adding fuel to fire. We will have some tea when we return. Alice, you must make tea for the colonel; he will not come out without it. He thinks this weather just what it ought to be: rather cold, if anything."

Alice had taken the bracelet-box in her hands as Lady Sarah spoke; when they had departed she carried it up-stairs to its place in Lady Sarah's bedroom. The colonel speedily rose from table, for his wife had laid her commands on him to join them early. Alice helped him to his tea, and as soon as he was gone she went up-stairs to bed.

To bed, but not to sleep. Tired as she was, and exhausted in frame, sleep would not come to her. She was living over again her interview with Gerard Hope. She could not, in her conscious heart, affect to misunderstand his implied meaning—that *she* had been the cause of his rejecting the union proposed to him. It diffused a strange rapture within her; and, though she had not perhaps been wholly blind and unconscious during the period of Gerard's stay with them, she now kept repeating the words, "Can it be that he loves me? can it be?"

It certainly was so. Love plays strange pranks. There was Gerard

Hope—heir to the colonel's fabulous wealth, consciously proud of his handsome person, his herculean strength, his towering form—called home and planted down by the side of a pretty and noble lady, on purpose that he might fall in love with her—Lady Frances Chenevix. And yet, the well-laid project failed: failed because there happened to be another at that young lady's side; a sad, quiet, feeble-framed girl, whose very weakness may have seemed to others to place her beyond the pale of man's love. But love thrives by contrasts; and it was the feeble girl who won the love of the strong man.

Yes; the knowledge diffused a strange rapture within her, Alice Seaton, as she lay there that night; and she may be excused if, for a brief period, she allowed range to the sweet fantasies it conjured up. For a brief period only. Too soon the depressing consciousness returned to her, that these thoughts of earthly happiness must be subdued; for she, with her confirmed ailments and conspicuous weakness must never hope to marry, as did other women. She had long known—her mother had prepared her for it—that one so afflicted and frail as she, whose tenure of existence was likely to be short, ought not to become a wife; and it had been her earnest hope to pass through life unloving, in that one sense, and unloved. She had striven to arm herself against the danger, against being thrown into the perils of temptation. Alas! it had come insidiously upon her; all her care had been set at naught; and she knew that she loved Gerard Hope with a deep and fervent love. "It is but another cross," she sighed, "another burden to surmount and subdue, and I will set myself from this night to the task. I have been a coward, shrinking from self-examination; but now that Gerard has spoken out, I can deceive myself no longer. I wish he had spoken more freely, that I might have told him it was useless."

It was only towards morning that Alice dropped asleep: the consequence was, that long after her usual hour for rising she was still sleeping. The opening of her door awoke her. It was Lady Sarah's maid who stood there.

"Why, miss! are you not up? Well, I never! I wanted the key of the small jewel-box, but I'd have waited if I had known."

"What do you say you want?" returned Alice, whose ideas were confused; as is often the case on being suddenly awakened.

"The key of the bracelet-box, if you please."

"The key?" repeated Alice. "Oh, I remember," she added, her recollection returning to her. "Be at the trouble, will you, Hughes, to take it out of my pocket: it is on that chair, under my clothes."

The servant came to the pocket, and speedily found the key. "Are you worse than usual, miss, this morning," asked she, "or have you overslept yourself?'

"I have overslept myself. Is it late?"

"Between nine and ten. My lady is up, and at breakfast with the colonel and Lady Frances."

Alice rose the instant the maid left the room, and made haste to dress, vexed with herself for sleeping so long. She was nearly ready when Hughes came in again.

"If ever I saw such a confusion as that jewel-case was in!" cried she in as pert and grumbling a tone as she dared to use. "The bracelets were thrown together without law or order—just at if they had been so much glass and tinsel from the Lowther Arcade."

"It was Lady Sarah," replied Alice. "I would have put them straight, but she told me to leave it for you. I thought she might prefer that you should do it."

"Of course her ladyship is aware there's nobody but myself knows their right places in it," returned Hughes, consequentially. "I could go to that, or to the other jewel-box, in the dark, miss, and take out any one thing my lady wanted, without disturbing the rest."

"I have observed that you have the gift of order," remarked Alice, with a smile. "It is very useful to those who possess it, and saves them much trouble and confusion."

"So it do, miss," said Hughes. "But I came to ask you for the diamond bracelet."

"The diamond bracelet!" echoed Alice. "What diamond bracelet? What do you mean, Hughes?"

"It is not in the box, miss."

"The diamond bracelets are both in the box," rejoined Alice.

"The old one is there; not the new one. I thought you might have taken it out to show someone, or to look at yourself, miss, for I'm sure it's a sight for pleasant eyes."

"I can assure you it is in the case," said Alice. "All are there, except what Lady Sarah had on. You must have overlooked it."

"I am a great donkey if I have," grumbled the girl. "It must be at the very bottom, amongst the cotton," she soliloquised, as she returned to Lady Sarah's apartments, "and I have just got to take every individual article out, to get to it. This comes of giving up one's keys to other folks."

Alice hastened down, begging pardon for her late appearance. It was readily accorded. Miss Seaton's office in the house was nearly a sinecure. When she had first entered upon it, Lady Sarah was ill, and required some one to sit with and read to her: but now that she was well again Alice had little to do.

Breakfast was scarcely over when Alice was called from the room. Hughes stood outside the door.

"Miss," said she, with a long face, "the diamond bracelet is not in the box. I thought I could not be mistaken."

"But it must be in the box," said Alice.

"But it is *not*," persisted Hughes, emphasising the negative. "Can't you believe me, miss? I want to know where it is, that I may put it up and lock the box."

Alice Seaton looked at Hughes with a puzzled, dreamy look. She was thinking matters over. Her face soon cleared again.

"Then Lady Sarah must have kept it out when she put in the rest. It was she who returned them to the case; I did not. Perhaps she wore it last night."

"No, miss, that she didn't. She wore only those two ——"

"I saw what she had on," interrupted Alice. "But she might also have put on the other, without my noticing. Or she may have kept it out for some other purposes. I will ask her. Wait here an instant, Hughes; for of course you will like to be at a certainty."

"That's cool," thought Hughes, as Alice went into the breakfast-room, and the colonel came out of it, with his *Times*. "I should have said it was somebody else would like to be at a certainty, instead of me," continued the girl, indulging in self-soliloquy. "Thank goodness the box wasn't in my charge, last night, if anything dreadful has come to pass. My lady don't keep out her bracelets for sport. Miss Seaton has left the key about, that's what she has done, and it's hard to say who hasn't been at it: I knew the box had been ransacked over."

"Lady Sarah," said Alice, "did you wear your new diamond bracelet last night?"

"No."

"Then you put it into the box with the others?"

"No," repeated Lady Sarah, who was languidly toying with the basket of ferns.

"After you had chosen the bracelets you wished to wear, you put the others into the box yourself," explained Alice. "Did you put in the new one, the diamond, or keep it out?"

"The new one was not there."

Alice stood confounded. "It was lying on the table, at the back of all the rest, Lady Sarah," she presently said. "Next the window."

"I tell you, Alice, it was not there. I don't know that I should have worn it, if it had been, but I certainly looked for it. Not seeing it, I supposed you had not put it out; and I did not care sufficiently to ask for it."

Alice felt in a mesh of perplexity; curious thoughts, and very unpleasing ones, were beginning to dawn upon her. "But indeed the bracelet was there when you went to the table," she urged. "I put it there."

"I can assure you that you labour under a mistake, as to its being there when I came up from dinner," answered Lady Sarah. "Why do you ask?"

"Hughes has come to say it is not in the case. She is outside, waiting."

"Outside, now? Hughes," she called out: and Hughes came in.

"What's this about my bracelet?"

"*I* don't know, my lady. The bracelet is not in its place, so I asked Miss Seaton. She thought your ladyship might have kept it out yesterday evening."

"I neither touched it nor saw it," said Lady Sarah.

"Then we have had thieves at work," spoke Hughes, decisively; who had been making up her mind to that as a fact.

"It must be in the box, Hughes," said Alice. "I laid it out on the table, in the back drawing-room; and it is impossible that thieves—as you phrase it—could have come there."

"Oh yes, it is in the box, no doubt," said Lady Sarah, somewhat crossly, for she disliked to be troubled, especially in hot weather. "You have not searched properly, Hughes."

"My lady," answered Hughes, "I can trust my hands and I can trust my eyes, and they have all four been into every hole and crevice of the box."

Lady Frances Chenevix laid down the *Morning Post*, and advanced. "Is the bracelet really lost?"

"It cannot be lost," returned Lady Sarah. "You are sure you put it out, Alice?"

"I am quite sure of that. It was lying first in the case, and ——"

"Yes it was," interrupted Hughes. "That is its place."

"And was consequently the first that I took out," continued Alice. "I put it on the table; and the others in a semi-circle, nearer to me. Why, as a proof that it lay there ——"

What was Alice going to add? Was she going to adduce as a proof that Gerard Hope had taken it up and made it a subject of conversation. Recollection came to her in time; she faltered, and abruptly broke off. But a faint, horrible dread, to which she would not give a shape, came stealing over her, and her face turned white, and she sank on a chair, trembling visibly.

"Now look at Alice!" uttered Frances Chenevix. "She is going into one of her agitation fits."

"Do not agitate yourself, Alice," cried Lady Sarah; "that will do no good. Besides, I feel sure the bracelet is all safe in the case: where else can it be? Fetch the case, Hughes, and I will look for it myself."

Hughes whisked out of the room, inwardly resenting the doubt cast on her eyesight.

"It is so strange," mused Alice, "that you did not see the bracelet when you came up."

"It was certainly not there to see," returned Lady Sarah.

"Perhaps you'll look for yourself, my lady," cried Hughes, returning with the jewel-box in her hands.

The box was well searched. The bracelet was not there.

"This is very strange, Hughes," exclaimed Lady Sarah.

"It's very ugly as well, my lady," answered Hughes, in a lofty tone, "and I'm thankful to the presiding genuses which rules such things, that I was not in charge when it happened. Though maybe, if I had been, it never would have took place, for I can give a guess how it was."

"Then you had better give it," said her mistress, curtly.

"If I do," returned Hughes. "I shall offend Miss Seaton."

"No, you will not, Hughes," said Alice. "Say what you please: I have need to wish this cleared up."

"Then, miss, if I may speak my thoughts, I think you must have left the key about. And there are strange servants in the house, you know, my lady. There's a kitchen-maid that only came in it when we did; and there's the new under-butler."

"Hughes, you are wrong," interrupted Alice. "The servants could not have touched the box, for the key was never out of my possession, and you know the lock is a Bramah. I locked the box last night in Lady Sarah's presence, and the key was not out of my pocket afterwards, until you took it from thence this morning."

"The key seems to have had nothing to do with it," interposed Frances Chenevix. "Alice says she put the diamond bracelet on the table with the rest; Lady Sarah says when she went to the table after dinner, the bracelet was not there. Were you in the room all the while, Alice?"

"Not quite. Very nearly. But no one could possibly have gone in without my seeing them. The folding-doors were open."

"It is quite a mystery," cried Lady Sarah.

"It beats conjuring, my lady," said Hughes. "Did any visitor come up-stairs, I wonder?"

"I did hear a visitor's knock while we were at dinner," said Lady Sarah. "Don't you remember, Fanny? You looked up, as if you noticed it."

"Did I?" answered Lady Frances, in a careless tone.

At that moment Thomas happened to enter with a letter, and his mistress put the question to him. Who had knocked?

"Sir George Danvers, my lady," was the ready answer. "When I said the colonel was at dinner, Sir George began to apologise for calling; but I explained that you were dining earlier than usual, because of the opera."

"Nobody else called?"

"Nobody knocked but Sir George, my lady."

"A covert answer," thought Alice; "but I am glad he is true to Gerard."

"What an untruth!" thought Lady Frances, as she remembered the visit of Alice's sister. "Thomas's memory must be short."

All the talk—and it was much prolonged—did not tend to throw any light upon the matter; and Alice, unhappy and ill, retired to her own room. The agitation had brought on a nervous and violent headache; she sat down in a low chair, and bent her forehead on her hands. One belief alone possessed her: that the unfortunate Gerard Hope had stolen the bracelet. Do as she would, she could not put it out of her mind: she kept repeating that he was a gentleman, that he was honourable, that he would never place her in so painful a position. Common sense replied that the temptation was suddenly laid before him, and he had confessed his pecuniary difficulties to be great: nay, had he not wished for this very bracelet, that he might make money ——

A knock at the chamber door. Alice lifted her sickly countenance, and bade the intruder enter. It was Lady Frances Chenevix.

"I came to ——Alice, how wretched you look! You will torment yourself into a fever."

"Can you wonder at my looking wretched?" returned Alice. "Place yourself in my position, Frances: it must appear to Lady Sarah as if I —I—had made away with the bracelet. I am sure Hughes thinks so."

"Don't you say unorthodox things, Alice. They would rather think that I had done it, of the two, for I have more use for diamond bracelets than you."

"It is kind of you to try to cheer me," sighed Alice.

"Just the thing I came to do. And to have a bit of chat with you as well. If you will let me."

"Of course I will let you."

"I wish to tell you I will not mention that your sister was here last evening. I promise you I will not."

Alice did not immediately reply. The words and their hushed tone caused a new trouble to arise within her, one which she had not glanced at. Was it possible that Lady Frances could imagine her sister to be the ——

"Lady Frances Chenevix!" burst forth Alice. "You cannot think it! She! my sister—guilty of a despicable theft! Have you forgotten that she moves in your own position in the world? that our family is scarcely inferior to yours?"

"Alice, I forgive you for so misjudging me, because you are not yourself just now. Of course, your sister cannot be suspected; I know that. But as you did not mention her when they were talking of who had been here, I supposed you did not wish her name dragged into so unpleasant an affair; and I hastened up to say there was no danger from me that it would be."

"Believe me, she is not the guilty person," returned Alice. "I have more cause to say so than you think for."

"What do you mean by that?" briskly cried Lady Frances. "You surely have no clue?"

Alice shook her head, and her companion's eagerness was lulled again. "It is well that Thomas was forgetful," remarked Lady Frances. "Was it really forgetfulness, Alice; or did you contrive to telegraph to him to be silent?"

"Thomas only spoke truth. At least, as regards my sister," she hastily added. "He did not let her in."

"Then it is all quite easy; and you and I can keep our own counsel."

Quite easy, possibly, to the mind of Frances Chenevix. But anything but easy to Miss Seaton: for the words of Lady Frances had introduced an idea more repulsive, more terrifying even, than that of suspecting Gerard Hope. Her sister acknowledged that she was in need of money, "a hundred pounds, or so," and Alice had seen her coming from the back room where the jewels lay. Still—*she* take a bracelet! Selina! It was preposterous.

Preposterous or not, Alice's torment was doubled. Which of the two had been the black sheep? One of them it must have been. Instinct, sisterly relationship, reason, and common sense, all combined to turn the scale against Gerard. But that there should be a doubt at all was not pleasant, and Alice started up impulsively and put her bonnet on.

"Where now?" cried Lady Frances.

"I will go to my sister's and ask her—and ask her—if—she saw any stranger here—any suspicious person in the hall or on the stairs," stammered Alice, making the best excuse she could make.

"But you know you were in or about the drawing-rooms all the time, and no one came in to them, suspicious or unsuspicious; so, how will that aid you?"

"True," murmured Alice. "But it will be a relief to go somewhere or do something."

Alice found her sister at home. The latter instantly detected that something was wrong; for the suspense, illness, and agitation had taken every vestige of colour from her cheeks and lips.

"What can be the matter, Alice?" was her greeting. "You look just like a walking ghost."

"I feel that I do," breathed poor Alice, "and I kept my veil down in the street, lest I might be taken for one, and scare the people. A great misfortune has fallen upon me, Selina. You saw those bracelets last night, spread out on the table?"

"Yes."

"They were in my charge, and one of them has been abstracted. It was of great value: gold links, holding diamonds."

"Abstracted!" repeated the elder sister, in both concern and surprise, but certainly without the smallest indications of a guilty knowledge. "How? In what manner?"

"It is a mystery. I only left the room when I met you on the staircase, and when I went up-stairs to fetch the letter for you. Directly after you left, Lady Sarah came up from dinner, and the bracelet was not there."

"It is incredible, Alice. And no one else entered the room at all, you say? No servant? no ——"

"Not anyone," interrupted Alice, determined not to speak of Gerard Hope.

"Then, child, it is simply impossible," was the calm rejoinder. "It must have fallen on the ground; or been mislaid in some way."

"It is hopelessly gone. Do you remember seeing it?"

"I do remember seeing, amidst the rest, a bracelet set with diamonds; but only on the clasp, I think. It ——"

"That was another; that one is all safe," interrupted Alice. "The one missing is of fine gold links interspersed with brilliants. Did you see it?"

"Not that I remember. I was there scarcely a minute, for I had only strolled into the back room just before you came down. To tell you the truth, Alice, my mind was too fully occupied with other things, to take much notice even of jewels. Do not look so perplexed: it will be all right. Only you and I were in the room, you say; and we could not take it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Alice, clasping her hands, and lifting her white, beseeching face to her sister's, "did you take it? In—in sport; or in —— Oh, surely you were not tempted to take it for anything else? Forgive me, Selina: you said you had need of money."

"Alice, are we going to have one of your old scenes of excitement? Strive for calmness. I am sure you do not know what you are implying. My poor child, I would rather help you to jewels than take them from you."

"But look at the mystery."

"It does appear to be a mystery, but it will no doubt be cleared up," was the reply, calm and equable. "Alice, what could you have been dreaming of, to suspect me? Have we not grown up together in our honourable home? You ought to know me, if anyone does."

"And you really saw nothing of it?" moaned Alice, with a sobbing catching of the breath.

"Indeed, I did not. In truth I did not. If I could help you out of your perplexity I would thankfully do it. Shall I return with you and assist you to search for the bracelet?"

"No, thank you. Every search has been made."

Not only was the denial of her sister fervent and calm, but her manner and countenance conveyed the impression of truth. Alice left her, inexpressibly relieved; but the conviction, that it must have been Gerard, returned to her in full force. "I wish I could see him!" was her mental exclamation.

And for once fortune favoured her wish. As she was dragging her weary limbs along, he came right upon her at the corner of a street.

"I am so thankful," she exclaimed. "I wanted to see you."

"I think you most want to see a doctor, Alice. How ill you look!"

"I have cause," she returned. "That bracelet has been stolen."

"Which bracelet?" asked Mr. Hope.

"That valuable one. The diamond. It was taken from the room."

"Taken when?" he rejoined, looking her full in the face—as a guilty man would scarcely dare to look.

"Then, or within a few minutes. When Lady Sarah came up from dinner it was not there. She came up almost immediately."

"Who took it?" he repeated, not yet recovering his surprise.

"I don't know," she faintly said. "It was under my charge. No one else was there."

"You do not wish me to understand that *you* are suspected?" he burst forth, with genuine feeling. "Their unjust meanness cannot have gone to that length!"

"I trust not, but I am very unhappy. I left the room when you did, but I only lingered outside on the stairs, watching—if I may tell the truth—whether you got out safely, and then I returned to it. Yet when Lady Sarah came up from dinner it was gone."

"And did no one else go into the room?" he repeated. "I met a lady at the door, who asked for you; I sent her up-stairs."

"She went in for a minute. It was my sister, Gerard."

"Oh indeed, was that your sister? Then she counts as ourselves in this. The bracelet was in the room when I left it——"

"You are sure of that?" interrupted Alice.

"I am. When I reached the door, I turned round to take a last look at you, and the diamonds of that particular bracelet gleamed at me from its place on the table."

"Oh, Gerard! is this the truth?"

"It is the truth, on my sacred word of honour," he replied, looking at her agitated face and wondering at her words. "Why else should I say it? Good-bye, Alice; I cannot stay another moment, for there's somebody coming I don't want to meet."

He was off like a shot. But his words and manner had conveyed a conviction of innocence to the mind of Alice, just as those of her sister had done. She stood still, looking after him in her dreamy wonder, and was jostled by the passers-by. *Which* of the two was the real delinquent? One of them it must have been.

(*To be continued next month.*)

## BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

From uplands, brown and shorn,
The lark greets not the morn ;
Silent are all earth's sweet, mysterious voices ;
No water-lily gleams
Beside the reedy streams ;
No more in leafy grove the thrush rejoices.

Under December skies
Coldly the white frost lies
On gnarled roots, by primrose stars forsaken ;
Afar in southern bowers
The birds, 'mid alien flowers,
Memories of home in exiled hearts awaken.

By cities overthrown,
Their shadowy wings have gone,
By many a classic vale, and snow-wreathed mountain ;
Or over desert lands,
Where, amid burning sands,
Green palm trees wave beside some lonely fountain.

The many-blossomed spring
With her soft spell will bring
Their woodland notes back to her leafy alleys;
The music to the brooks,
In many rustic nooks,
And blue forget-me-nots to thymy valleys.

The tender springing corn,
The blossom to the thorn,
The silver dews, she calls with voice enchanted ;
But not the faces gone,
With many an angel tone
And vanished smile, by which our homes are haunted.

Beneath the summer's glow,
As under winter's snow,
Calmly they sleep for whom our hearts are yearning :
Ne'er from that far off Land
By airs celestial fanned,
With leaves and flowers, like wandering birds returning.

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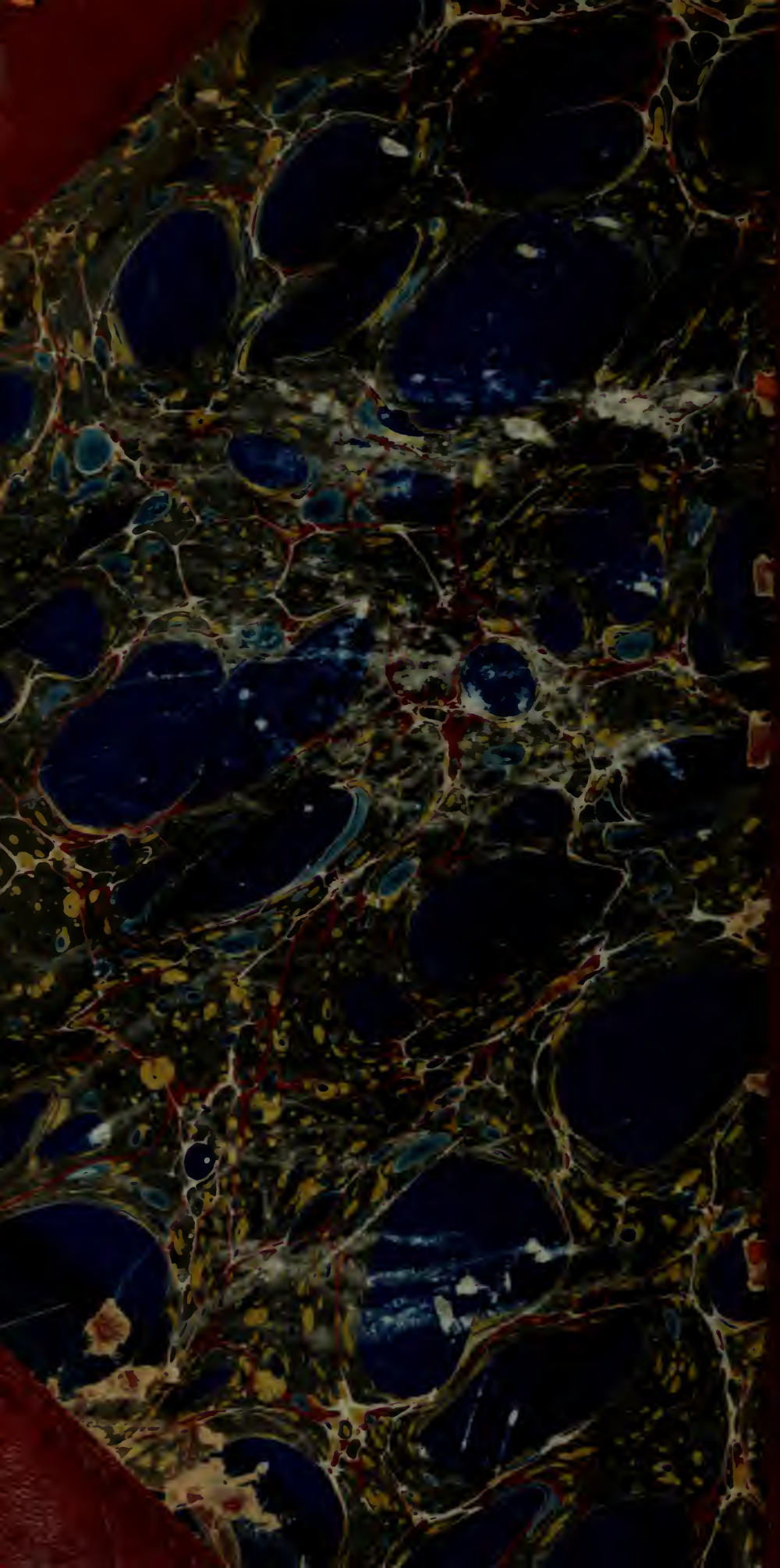
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